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# *The Shape of Things*

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ADOLF HITLER MUST BE GIVEN CREDIT FOR having eliminated the element of uncertainty from the German elections. It had been predicted that he would poll between 98 and 99 per cent of the votes in the national plebiscite on March 29; the "yes" vote was officially reported to be exactly 99 per cent of the total cast. Although the question was ostensibly that of approval of the Hitler regime after three years in office, the immediate issue, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, was one on which no "loyal" German could voice his disapproval. The campaign marked the high point in the Nazis' mastery of mob psychology. Two million people were packed into the streets of Cologne to catch a glimpse of the *Führer,* of whom 500,000 obtained entry to the Cathedral Square to hear the last of his thirteen speeches. On the previous day Hitler had stood on the chassis of a huge locomotive in the Krupp factory at Essen and addressed 120,000 persons. The few voters who failed to report to the polls by 1 p.m. of election day were visited hourly by loyal Nazis and openly threatened if they failed to cast their ballots. No one will ever know how many Germans were courageous enough, in the face of this overwhelming pressure, to register a protest against National Socialism. Jews were excluded from the polls, and the ballots gave but one choice—an affirmative vote. Yet 543,000 individuals mutilated their ballots in such a way that they were thrown out. Despite announcement that they would be considered invalid, thousands of blank ballots are known to have been counted for Hitler, as were ballots with the Nazi names crossed out. Fascists criticize elections under democracy as a sham and a fraud; if they are, we wonder how a Nazi plebiscite should be described.

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THE FIRST IMPORTANT MOVE TOWARD A National Farmer-Labor Party has been made by the most logical prime mover—the Minnesota party. Its biennial convention, which met in St. Paul on March 27-29, was more than a routine gathering met to put through a platform and steam-roller a state ticket. It was a fateful occasion, for without the indorsement of the powerful Minnesota party any move toward a national party this year would be hopeless from the start. The passage of the resolution indorsing a national movement and calling for further exploration of its possibilities this year was therefore an event of the first importance. No Rubicons have been crossed, however, for the resolution was worded cautiously, and any failure on the part of the national

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movement to gather momentum would still leave it possible later for Governor Olson and Senator Benson to trade their support of Roosevelt in the national field for Democratic support of the state ticket. If enough farmer and labor groups throughout the country organize on state and local lines to follow Minnesota's example, the next step should be an informal gathering of leaders to plan a national convention. That convention would still confront two difficulties. One is how to handle the problem of red-baiting. In the dispute over the seating of the leftist delegates, the Minnesota group followed Senator Benson's advice: "We have been the victims of red-baiting; I appeal to Farmer-Laborites not to be red-baiters themselves." The other problem is one of platform. The Minnesota platform of ultimate nationalization of the basic industries, social insurance, a curb on the Supreme Court, and a constitutional amendment to allow for social control shows at once realism and discretion.

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THE TOWNSEND MOVEMENT CONTINUES TO meet with tribulations. First, there is the Congressional investigation by a none too sympathetic House committee. Then there is the internal split in the directing group and the (probably forced) resignation of R. E. Clements, the "organizing genius" of the movement. Finally there is the cruel dilemma of Dr. Townsend as to whether he shall link himself with the uncertain fortunes of Mr. Borah's candidacy or strike out boldly for a third party. The newspapers have seized upon the more dramatic disclosures in Mr. Clements's testimony—his fat salary of $12,585 in addition to the perquisites of house, groceries, maid, and travel expenses, the profits of the *Townsend Weekly*, the million dollars that has already been collected from Townsend club members. But most of the talk about the "racket" elements in the movement seems in our kind of society a bit hollow. Mr. Clements borrowed from American corporate enterprise not only the secret of successful organization but also a proper respect for high salaries, and the capacity to recognize a good thing when he saw it. Moreover, there is something about the glee with which Democrats and Republicans alike have received the disclosures which suggests that Congressmen, worried by the membership of over 2,000,000 in the Townsend clubs, will use the inquiry to cloak the economic causes of the movement by playing up its racketeering aspects. The real tragedy of the Townsend episode is that Townsendism has genuine roots in the soil of the economic insecurity and economic despair of aged and young alike. These needs, instead of being met by the government, have been left to a few individuals to exploit. The needs remain. What will the government do?

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AIDED BY THE DIVERSION OF PUBLIC ATTENtion to the more serious problems of European peace, Mussolini has been pushing his Ethiopian campaign with more than usual brutality. The bombardment of the open city of Harar, involving the destruction of an Egyptian and an Ethiopian hospital, was not only in direct violation of international law but was senseless from a military point of view. As in the aerial attack on the primitive village of Jijiga a few weeks ago, the Italians appear to be staking everything on the hope of demoralizing the Ethiopians by a show of superior power. While their armies have undoubtedly made progress in the Tembien region and in the vicinity of Mount Alaji, their claims of crushing victories appear to have been greatly exaggerated. In the south they have moved forward with comparative ease from their base at Ualual about ninety miles to Gorahai and Gerlogubi, but the territory between these points and Harar is believed to be impassable for an army burdened with modern equipment. In the north the situation is not much better. Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, British military expert, declares that after six months of the campaign the Italians have reached a point they could have gained in a few weeks as far as any Ethiopian resistance was concerned. The primary problem of overcoming climatic difficulties, of road building, and of the movement of supplies over an almost impassable terrain has been only partially solved for the short distance that they have advanced. Every additional mile adds complications to this problem. Barring a let-up in sanctions, Mussolini will have his hands full in Ethiopia for many months to come.

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THE ELEVATOR LOCKOUT CONTINUES IN many buildings; and while the arbitration of wages has begun, the force which is most effective in winning union demands, namely, the crippling of service, is no longer available. Moreover, that force cannot be easily remobilized once it has been dispersed. The real-estate interests held the trump card from the beginning: the funds of the union were limited, while the owners, however bankrupt in the technical sense of the term, were nevertheless in a position to hold out indefinitely against giving building-service workers $8 more a month, even if it meant paying strike-breakers $9 a day. The owners not only won the strike but, having forced a compromise upon the union, proceeded to repudiate even the faint concessions they had made. Unless Ferdinand A. Silcox, the arbitrator, can force upon the owners better terms than Mr. Bambrick could, with thousands of strikers behind him, the elevator strike must be set down as merely another venture in education for workers, labor leaders, and the public.

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ALTHOUGH THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE WAS forced to make certain concessions to conservative business interests on the Administration's tax program, the amendments have not seriously weakened the measure. According to the new schedule the tax will be imposed on the total rather than on the undivided profits and will be low—4 per cent—as long as the undistributed net income is not over 10 per cent of the total, but will rise to 42½ per cent when more than 57½ per cent of the income is undistributed. While sound tax practice would not have permitted as large reserves as are likely to be accumulated under the subcommittee's schedule, the committee deserves praise for withstanding pressure from

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such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce of the United States and the National Association of Manufacturers for an even more lenient levy. It also should be given credit for dropping the processing tax in face of pressure from the Administration for its reenactment. Another promising Congressional revolt against Administration policy is reported brewing in connection with appropriations for the PWA. In submitting his budget for relief, the President deliberately ignored the PWA and asked for $1,500,000,000 for the far more dubious activities of the WPA. Supporters of Secretary Ickes are asking for an additional $700,000,000 for his agency. While we are not impressed with Mr. Ickes's record as an administrator, we can whole-heartedly indorse his present plea. Abandonment of the PWA at this juncture would not only be disastrous for recovery, but would mark the end of all slum-clearance and low-cost-housing projects.

*

THE RENEWAL OF JAPANESE ATTACKS against the outposts of the Mongolian People's Republic has interrupted the slow improvement in Soviet-Japanese relations which has been under way in the past few months. Prior to the recent outbreaks the Hirota government had accepted the Soviet plea for a border commission to investigate the cause of the disputes and, if necessary, to demarcate the frontier once again. But Hirota is apparently no better able to control the local militarists than was his predecessor. Between March 25, when the Soviet proposal was accepted, and March 30 five serious skirmishes occurred along the Soviet-Mongolian border, four of which appear to have been attacks upon Mongolia and the fifth a Japanese sortie into Siberia. Spurred by the new threat against its territory, the Mongolian Republic has ratified a mutual-assistance agreement with the Soviet Union which removes all uncertainty regarding Russia's attitude in the event of a Japanese invasion. Since during six months of the year no fighting can be done, the danger of war is greatest in the spring. Nevertheless, there is one factor, in addition to those discussed by Louis Fischer elsewhere in this issue, which makes such an outcome unlikely. The presence of a large portion of the Chinese Red Army in northern Shansi, only a short distance from the Peifing-Kalgan railway, makes it practically impossible for the Japanese to attack Ulan Butor from the south, and constitutes a reasonably good insurance against war.

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IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ANY ONE EXCEPT shipbuilders and armament manufacturers can derive any particular satisfaction from the naval treaty signed by the United States, Great Britain, France, and the British Dominions. Two great naval powers, which happen also to be among the chief threats to international peace—Italy and Japan—have refused to sign the agreement. The other powers are bound only so long as Rome and Tokyo make no attempt to expand their fleets beyond the limits prescribed in the pact. Both the United States and Britain are free to go ahead with their recently announced building programs. On the other hand, it may be argued that even a bad agreement is better than none, and that there is some value in the cordial understanding reached between the United States and the United Kingdom. Nor is it possible to ignore the financial savings to be gained from substituting 8,000-ton cruisers for the present costly 10,000-ton vessels. These gains are more than offset, however, by the conference's failure to establish a satisfactory balance of naval power either in Europe or the Far East. What stability exists at the moment rests entirely on the cooperation of the powerful American and British fleets. Such an arrangement comes far closer to a military alliance than the type of collective security which alone can promise protection against a perpetuation of the war system.

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ON ITS WAY TO THE SUPREME COURT THE Labor Relations Act has been having as many adventures as Alice in a judicial wonderland. The lower federal courts have by now handed down 27 decisions on the act, 16 for the government and 11 against it. Of these, most have merely passed on the granting or denial of injunctions or restraining orders directed to the Labor Board. Five have tackled the question of the constitutionality of the act, three holding it valid and two invalid. The two most recent decisions—an unfavorable one by Judge Barnes in the Bendix Aviation case, and a favorable one by Judge Bondy in the Associated Press case—do not add to our clarity. Judge Barnes holds, as Judge Otis did in an earlier case, that for the federal government to guarantee collective bargaining means to strip employers of their liberty of contract and to deprive them of property without due process of law. Judge Bondy on the other hand sustains the statement of Congress that industrial unrest and chaos are a burden on interstate commerce, thus bringing collective bargaining within the scope of the federal power. Again the Supreme Court is presented with two plausible and contradictory lines of argument and precedent, and again the decision—which will probably be rendered in the Greyhound Bus case—will depend on how the judges feel about labor. The employers, as Paul Ward points out in this week's Washington dispatch, have made their own attitude toward labor plain enough for anyone to read. The members of the Labor Board are getting a first-rate education in the full extent of industrial tyranny wherever the employer, in addition to being profit-taker, also exercise a feudal power over his workers.

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THE SYRIAN GENERAL STRIKE, DESCRIBED BY Mr. Viton elsewhere in this issue, has apparently ended in a victory for the Syrians. The strike lasted forty-two days, and in spite of the arrest of hundreds of participants, the wounding of other hundreds, and the death of twenty-six, it was firmly maintained until a satisfactory settlement was reached. On February 24 High Commissioner de Martel announced that France was ready to negotiate a treaty with Syria modeled on the treaty between Great Britain and Iraq. It is expected, perhaps too optimistically, that all the demands of the Syrian Nationalists will be granted and that a new status for Syria will

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commence by the end of 1936 or the beginning of 1937. There should be a lesson in this for oppressors and oppressed alike. It is impossible indefinitely to subdue a whole people against their will; and even machine-guns are not effective against mass resistance.

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CARLETON BEALS, ON ANOTHER PAGE, PRESENTS the results of a first-hand investigation of the Administration's project to "rehabilitate" destitute farmers in the region of Birmingham, Alabama. In another connection Paul Ward reports a conference held in Washington by the National Committee on Rural Social Planning at which representatives of the submerged sections of our farm population, the share-cropper and the day laborer, gave graphic testimony about what the farm-relief program had done not for but to them. The tales of eviction, hunger, denial of relief, and persecution for union activities which have become familiar to *Nation* readers were spread before the Department of Agriculture itself. It is recorded in the Washington Merry-Go-Round that the evicted share-croppers have been denied help because the Arkansas relief officials are appointed through Senator Robinson. The Senator sees eye to eye with landlords, and the Administration does not care to oppose a politician as powerful as Joe Robinson. That may explain what is happening in Arkansas. But what explains the attitude of Rexford Tugwell, who is directly responsible for the so-called rehabilitation program which Carleton Beals describes? A few weeks ago Mr. Tugwell denied in the pages of *The Nation* similar charges made by Tom Burke. But the findings of Mr. Beals bear out the thesis of Tom Burke in every particular. Mr. Beals is willing to submit to Mr. Tugwell additional details if protection is assured to those from whom he obtained his data.

# *America Is Arming*

QUIETLY, unobtrusively, without the fanfare that has accompanied its other acts, the Roosevelt Administration has been preparing for war. Last week the Senate passed the War Department appropriation bill, adding some $66,000,000 to the $545,000,000 bill that the House had passed, and bringing the total army appropriation to $611,362,604. The navy-appropriation bill runs now to $549,591,299. This means an appropriation for land and sea forces of $1,160,953,903. It represents a 60 per cent increase over last year's appropriation of $744,839,588, which in turn was a 50 per cent increase over the $533,597,243 appropriated for the preceding year. Nor is this all. The allotments made during the past year from federal public works and relief funds for the purposes of the military establishment, although difficult to estimate, run probably from a quarter to three-quarters of a billion dollars. If this continues, an estimate of a billion and a half to two billion dollars would be a fair measure of what we shall be spending during the coming year to keep the god of war in trim.

These are cold figures, and one does not need to add to their eloquence. Cold figures are as eloquent as cold steel, especially when the figures are such as will eventually turn into the steel of bayonets and battleships. But it is worth noting that America is now the proud possessor of the largest peace-time war budget that any country has or has had in the history of the world.

Mars is a costly god and bids fair to become the American god. But the war appropriations do not tell the whole story of how we are preparing for war. In terms of manpower the so-called small standing army is being brought to the highest level of peace-time strength. Oswald Garrison Villard has pointed out that there are already 485,500 regular and National Guard soldiers and sailors in service. To these he adds 209,900 reserves, bringing the total to 695,400 in uniform. We are now building more naval bases and air bases and armories, training more officers and reserves, building more ships and airplanes, making more war gases and gas masks than ever before. America is building—but what it is chiefly building is weapons of destruction for the war to come. We may not be expert at planning for plenty in our economic life and utilizing our peace-time resources to the full. But we are being fearfully efficient in laying elaborate plans for the fateful M-day, the day of mobilization. We have an elaborate army plan not only for the conscription of military manpower, but for economic conscription as well. The War Department has set up a complete system of industrial quotas, allocating to each industrial establishment the amount of war supplies that it will be expected to furnish according to a schedule. The contracts are as good as made. All that remains is for the war to break out.

There is a deadly meaning in all these plans and preparations, all these blueprints, all this building and spending. That meaning is war. But what pulls and pressures have been at work here can only be guessed at. Certainly it is not the needs of national defense. The purposes of national defense could be met with one-third the present expenditures. We have been swept up in the European war hysteria. The constant talk of an impending European war has undoubtedly given the American general staffs and American statesmen the military jitters. Much closer home is our fear of a Japanese war—a fear whose flames have been lit and are being persistently fanned by Mr. Hearst's newspaper campaign. To that must be added the pressure exerted here as in every country by the War Department and the general staffs—a pressure that is a compound of bureaucratic pride, professional jealousies, narrowness of world outlook, and the sheer desire to play with toys that you have gone to infinite trouble in making. One of the great dangers in having the whole industrial establishment of the country ready for conscription is that it gives the War Department the sense of security which makes its pressures on Congress and the President all the greater. Add the pressures from professional patrioteers and from the industrialists and lobbyists, whose puppets they are. One of the most active fields for lobbying is the field of war orders. The contracts are fat, the prices are generous, the turnover is great. Here, also, lies the greatest danger, for it is unthinkable that a group of industrialists with

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War Department contracts already made out would not in a period of industrial stringency feel highly tempted to get the benefit of those contracts. Finally, there is the recurring theme of the use to which an efficient military establishment could be put in any case of civil disturbance. The Japanese phantom is not the only one that our imagination has conjured up; there is also the red-scare phantom. The fact that the army and the National Guard, as the naked power of the state, can be turned against labor struggles is certainly not the least of what recommends the recent army appropriations to those who approve them.

America is arming—arming not for national defense but for a war that is far from the real purposes of the American people. In a period of our history in which militarism cannot help playing havoc with our national destiny, we are going in for militarism. The militaristic effect of all these preparations on our modes of thought is inevitable. And yet the problems which agitate American life and split American society are not problems that can be met by the mind of the soldier or the point of the bayonet. They are problems of economic organization and statecraft, of technological planning, of human understanding. They require cool wits and the large view. They require above all else keeping our civil liberties open. When the role of the War Department grows so monstrous in our expenditures and our activities, every one of these aims is defeated. There can be no doubt—and every observer who has traveled around the country testifies to it—that at heart the American people still desire peace more than they desire anything else. These war preparations are a defiant challenge to that wish for peace—an insult thrown straight at the faces of the people. The one thing that ought to be remembered by every American in and out of the national administration is not only that a war prepared for so thoroughly is a war whose coming is thereby facilitated. Even more than that the fatal fact is that at the moment of the outbreak of war America will be thrown into a state of virtual fascism with labor conscripted, collective bargaining outlawed, civil liberties suspended, thought and action regimented. From such a state of virtual fascism our culture may never recover.

# *Bombing Out the Middle Class*

THE recent hearings on the bill to repeal the Teachers' Oath Law in Massachusetts have proved the efficacy of the oath in turning college professors into rebels—a result the reactionary legislators could hardly have intended. A veritable War of Independence was fought with all of Boston either taking part or looking on. Broadsides of passion, eloquence, logic, ridicule were all fired at the law by the biggest of academic shots. But despite this unanimous support of the repeal bill, it is still in committee, and both the temper of the hearings and the composition of the House make its adoption unlikely.

Viewed pragmatically, teachers' oaths may prove a most effective weapon in the current fight for human rights, bringing to the front several divisions which might have preferred to sit tight in academic dugouts in a hundred university towns. To many persons, especially students and teachers, the oaths have appeared as a startling symbol of repression, a warning that in small but menacing ways "it" is already happening here.

When a striker is beaten up by armed guards, when a Communist charged with sedition is imprisoned for twenty years, when vigilantes kidnap a union organizer or smash a radical meeting place, the echoes of these acts of terror die out quickly in the peaceful corridors of our schools and colleges. Indeed, to most middle-class persons, liberal as well as conservative, such events are at worst casualties inflicted on a remote battlefield. He who does not feel the chain when it works a brother's pain is the ordinary man in the street or on the university campus—and his name is Legion. He is prone to think that such outrages are isolated, infrequent, unrelated, without serious significance. He will not face the fact that every denial of civil right is a direct threat to his own personal liberty and to the guaranties on which it rests.

The teachers' oath laws in some twenty states have bombed out of their shelters thousands of such men and women. Led by a few who from the first have realized the dangers implicit in the law, teachers in schools and colleges are mobilizing a belated but sturdy and almost unanimous resistance. And everywhere they have won the support of the students in their institutions and the more sophisticated groups in their communities. The middle class begins to scent trouble.

Not that the protest against the oath implies any fundamental social choice or even a clear realization of the nature of the threat. On the contrary, the chief emotion of the majority of protestants is resentment at the "imputation of disloyalty" in the oath laws, the suggestion that teachers might also be radicals. And behind this sense of injured innocence lurks a further feeling of outrage that members of a learned calling should be held to account for their words and acts by politicians representing a noisy rabble of legionnaires, professional patriots, and the yellow press. Those who have taken the next step and identified themselves with the jailed Communist or the terrorized picket are relatively few. But the identity is there; and the protest is shaped out of the same sound impulse in both cases. After all, armies are never made up of altruists. Only a few men fought for woman suffrage; only a handful of Gentiles will work with genuine zeal for the rescue of the German Jews. As long as repression, however widespread, is aimed chiefly at workers and avowed radicals, the middle class will inevitably minimize its importance or deny its existence. But when the stink bombs begin to drop in the academic trenches the troops tumble out and become aware that a war is actually on. And in this particular war, whether either of them likes it or not, President Conant and Angelo Herndon are enlisted in the same service—along with all the rest of us whose right to speak or publish our undictated opinion has been challenged or abolished.

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# *A Hard Job—Ill Done*

THERE are roughly a million persons unemployed in New York City. About half of these are at present on the relief rolls, and this 500,000 is about equally divided between work relief and home relief. The average work-relief wage is $72.23 a month, which usually represents the total income of a family; the range is from $55 to $103, with most of the WPA workers falling in the lower brackets. The cost of living in New York is higher than in any other section of the country; rents are approximately 20 per cent higher. In other words, while New York's relief rates are $20 above the national average, they must be spread out just as thin to cover the necessities of life. And on top of these facts the WPA office has announced that 40,000 workers must be dropped from the rolls by July 1.

It is clear, then, that the administration of relief in a city of seven millions is an arduous and probably a thankless task. An ideal relief administrator would have to be a man of superhuman powers, of inordinate courage and wisdom, and completely disinterested. Such men do not grow on trees ready for the plucking. We must be content with a reasonable working compromise, but one may seriously doubt that Victor F. Ridder, the present incumbent, is even a compromise. Mr. Ridder does not appear to be in any way the man for the job.

Mr. Ridder suffers from "demonstration" troubles. His relief workers have grievances. Since they are paid less than a living wage, have no security of tenure, and are all too often performing work inferior to that for which they have skill and experience, their grievances are understandable enough. They are attempting to organize themselves into a union, which as workers they have every right to do. There is no law which forbids relief workers the recourse of collective bargaining. As union members they form committees; they make speeches, wave flags, picket the relief offices. Once in a while they get into a fracas with the police—which for union pickets is comparatively easy. One or two of them have gone so far as to bite a policeman. With the exception of the last named, which is, to say the least, unsanitary, there is nothing in their activities that is not perfectly legal and proper—or legal and unavoidable. But what does Mr. Ridder do? About twice a week he issues a statement denouncing all relief protestants as reds and agitators, declares that the committees seeking to interview him are not bona fide PWA workers, fills his offices with armed guards, and as a last spectacular gesture sends the Black Maria up to the tenth floor of the Port Authority building to arrest ten men and women who are committing the horrendous crime of singing the "Star Spangled Banner" in the corridors.

If this seems to be taking the New York relief situation more frivolously than is fitting, it should be said at once that Mr. Ridder himself has contributed the atmosphere of low comedy. The mass meeting of 25,000 persons in February at which Representative Marcantonio figured indicates that Mr. Ridder is the victim of a Communist psychosis; all he had to say about the violent dispersal of the meeting by policemen with clubs in their hands was again that "outside agitators" and "Communists" had caused the trouble. He is evidently incapable of realizing how much his own acts contribute to an unhappy situation. Relief workers are faced with a threat of a steady curtailment of the federal relief program. It is admitted that the states and cities are incapable of increasing their already heavy load. And it is illuminating to learn that in New York the total case load of all private charitable agencies is at present something less than 8,000. In the face of such bitter insecurity, both physical and psychological, relief workers are special cases, and it is obvious that Mr. Ridder is incapable of handling them. He is behaving like a typical fascist autocrat. The sooner he is removed the better.

# *Is Mussolini Moving Toward Socialism?*

CONSERVATIVES in this country have been impressed, and not a little frightened, by Mussolini's recently announced intention of nationalizing many of Italy's key industries. Having been accustomed to look upon fascism as a bulwark against bolshevism, they have suddenly become obsessed by the fear that after all Mussolini may simply be a Comintern agent in disguise.

There is just enough basis for their anxiety to create considerable confusion on the subject among liberals as well as tories. Italian fascism is not as completely reactionary as it is sometimes pictured in the émigré press; if it were, Mussolini would not have been able to hold popular support for as long as he has. Mussolini has renounced and apparently forgotten his old Socialist sympathies, yet he is too shrewd a politician to lose sight of the appeal of equalitarian catchwords. He has never ceased to speak of making the workers "collaborators with capital," and of the necessity of a "higher social justice." His program for a "corporative state," though hardly radical, has been bitterly opposed by employer groups on the ground that workers should have no influence in determining policy.

But in contrast to these fine phrases and the paper organizations guaranteeing labor "equality" with capital, it is significant that no real attempt has been made in the fourteen years of Fascist rule to correct the existing maldistribution of wealth or to improve working-class living standards. Even such an elementary reform measure as progressive taxation is virtually non-existent. The bulk of the government's revenue is obtained through heavy levies on consumption goods. The ordinary income tax is not graduated and it is paid by all groups in the population. There is a small surtax but it starts at 1 per cent on incomes of 3,000 lire ($240) and rises to a maximum of 10 per cent on incomes of 1,000,000 lire ($80,000) or over. Real wages have declined from 15 to 20 per cent since the March on Rome.

In the absence of specific information it is difficult to say to what degree Il Duce's latest step may be called "socialistic." No action has yet been taken, and it is not clear

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how or when Il Duce is planning to proceed. It has not even been suggested that the owners should be expropriated. If the procedure adopted in the recent seizure of the banks is any criterion, we may assume that the stockholders will be adequately compensated. Some losses may occur, but the heavy selling of war stocks three days before Mussolini's speech indicates that many of the big investors were tipped off in advance.

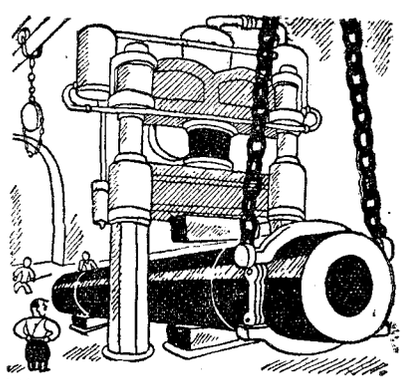
The real point of issue, however, is whether Il Duce's latest move represents considered policy or whether it was forced on him by desperate economic conditions at home. While the threat of a general European war may have hurried his decision, we may assume that this was not the primary motivating force. The domestic economic crisis is known to be extremely severe, although it has been impossible to obtain reliable economic statistics for Italy since the beginning of the Ethiopian campaign. No information is available on the cost of the war, or on the effect of sanctions on the national economy. We do know, however, that the gold reserve has continued to decline, and that the purchases of foreign goods have been reduced to a minimum. Wholesale prices have increased by 20 per cent in the past year, while agricultural wages have remained stationary and those of industrial workers have risen by less than 4 per cent. Despite the draft of men for the African war, there were over 600,000 unemployed at the last report. In the absence of glowing stories from the Italian press agents, we are justified in assuming that the rate of economic deterioration has been greatly accelerated in the past six months. Nationalization of industry would be the logical step in the face of a threatened breakdown of capitalist production.

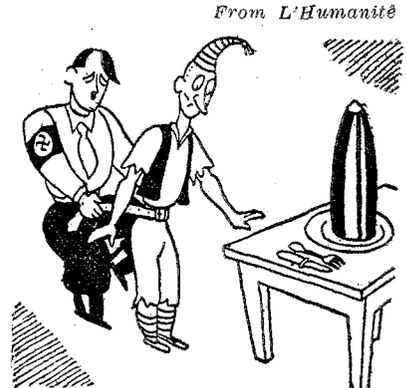
The reactionary nature of Fascist economic policy stands out in full clarity when one considers Mussolini's speech as a whole. Though the attempt to establish greater self-sufficiency has been one of the primary causes of Italy's decline, Mussolini reaffirms his desire to make the country economically "independent." For some countries economic self-sufficiency might offer a degree of security, but for Italy it can only mean the direst economic stringency for the masses. The abolition of the Chamber of Deputies and the strengthening of the Council of Corporations indicate that the broad outlines of Fascist policy are unchanged. The state remains all-powerful, but it has made no attempt to curb the wealth or the power of the owning class. Nationalization of a few industries will mean a transfer of investment for a limited number of individuals, but it will not greatly affect the possibilities for exploitation by the capitalist class as a whole. Land ownership remains in private hands, as does the bulk of industry and agriculture. Capitalism in Italy has unquestionably been weakened by the cumulative effect of the depression, war preparations, sanctions, and a suicidal commercial policy, but there is a wide gap between collapse and socialism. If Italy is ever to throw off the shackles of capitalism, it will not be under the auspices of a political gangster whose sole ambition is to restore the glories of the Roman Empire—with himself as Caesar.

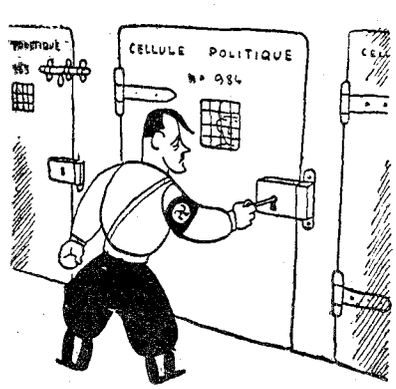
## HITLER'S GOOD FAITH IS EVIDENT

*From L'Humanité*

Has he not executed the Treaty of Locarno?

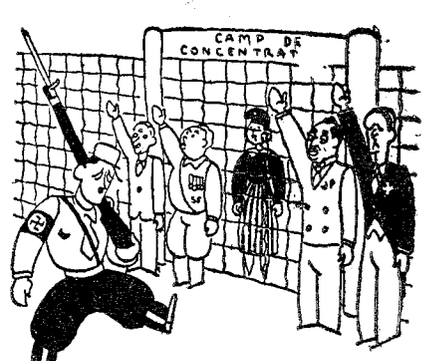

His factories are busy working for peace.


He seeks to bring happiness to his people.



Thanks to him, order reigns in Germany.

The Rhineland occupation was only a symbolic gesture and when war comes, it will only be a symbolic war.



As for his friends of the French Right, are they ready to apply the methods he uses so successfully in Germany.

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# WASHINGTON WEEKLY

BY PAUL W. WARD

THE LEARNED MR. SAPOSS

*Washington, March 29*

J. WARREN MADDEN, the obscure Pittsburgh lawyer whom President Roosevelt selected a few months ago to head the National Labor Relations Board, is rapidly acquiring a liberal education at public expense. He started out to steer his bark into a judicial calm. In a speech he made on taking office he sought to reassure the nation's employers and so win their cooperation in the enforcement of the Wagner Labor Act, which the NLRB was set up to administer. He succeeded only in enraging labor leaders, who thought that Madden, by emphasizing the act's weaknesses, had nipped in the bud a new organizing campaign such as they had waged in 1933 under the temporary stimulus of Section 7-a. Then, having learned his first lesson, he made a more forceful speech before the National Association of Manufacturers, appealing to their sense of fair play. He discovered that they had none, and that their officers had taken advantage of his own sense of fair play to scan his manuscript in advance and prepare an immediate rebuttal, which was exploded in his face.

Next came the lesson that completed Madden's undergraduate training in industrial relations. He presided at the hearing of the Fruehauf Trailer Company case at Detroit and heard company officials testify that they had hired a Pinkerton agent, J. N. Wheeler, to pass as one of their employees, spy upon their men, become a member of the union and eventually its treasurer, and use that vantage point to prevent a strike. When Madden heard that "Treasurer" Wheeler was even then short in his union accounts, he lost his aloofness and boomed out that under the circumstances it was the company itself that actually owed the union money. The statement brought company counsel to their feet, protesting it was complete proof that the board was prejudiced. Their thunderings left Madden unimpressed, and from that day forward he has been what he should have been in the beginning—a man who never forgets that in the constant conflict between employer and employee the odds, already heavily weighted in the employer's favor, are made more so when Jarndyce *vs.* Jarndyce jurisprudence is substituted for the picket line, boycott, and brickbat. Day by day, as new reports by trial examiners reach his desk, he is learning more and more of the slimy tricks by which employers, large and small, thwart the efforts of their men to organize so that they may gain some control over the conditions under which they must work, eat, sleep, breed, and die.

Dave Saposs, that cathedral of labor learning, who has been retained as director of the board's research and statistical section, could have told Madden all these things in advance, but it is probably best that the chairman should learn them by personal experience. Saposs certainly could have prepared him for his latest lesson—the discovery that federal law is so completely without meaning in the sovereign state of Arkansas that hayseed county judges do not hesitate to enjoin its functions and civic leaders do not balk at running its agents out of town. The discovery was made in the first instance by Robert B. Watts, a former Wall Street lawyer, who is now a top-flight member of the NLRB's legal division. Watts has just filed with Madden and his fellow board members, Edwin S. Smith and John M. Carmody, a preliminary report on a case at Warren, Arkansas.

He told how the leading citizens of Warren joined in an attempt to prevent the board from investigating a complaint that the town's sole manufacturing industry, the Bradley Lumber Company, was violating the Wagner act; how the mayor, the sheriff, and the town marshal joined in that campaign; and how the company, failing in its attempt to get a federal District Court or the Circuit Court of Appeals to block the investigation, successfully got a County Court to enjoin the federal agency. Finally, he told how the County Court injunction, signed without notice to the government at the jurist's home Sunday night, March 15, was served upon Watts and his colleagues as the hearing began the next morning; how the wives of company straw bosses, packing the hearing room, jeered and hissed and laughed at the helplessness of the federal government's representatives; and how he had to charter a bus and secretly transport all the witnesses in the case to New Orleans, where the hearing was held a few days ago. It is to be resumed there in a few days to take testimony showing that immediately after the Supreme Court's NRA decision the Bradley Lumber Company so cut wages

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that it was able to quote prices that undermined the Northwest's lumber industry and led to the strikes there last year. The company, employing from 700 to 800 men, is one of the largest of its kind in the South.

A detailed résumé of Watts's report would have to take note of the difficulty he and his aides encountered in getting a place to stay in Warren; of the intimidation practiced by the company not only against witnesses who were its own employees but also against the local railroad freight agents, whose records were subpoenaed; of the fifty discharges resorted to by the company in order to smash the union which the men had organized without outside assistance or urging; and of the fact that, when foiled in their efforts to block the hearing, the company's representatives boycotted the proceedings. There would have to be a footnote to the effect that the NLRB's records contain numerous cases from which this one is distinguished only by the fact that intimidation was exerted against the board itself. The case also is distinguished by the fact that it represents the first instance in which the agents of a state have so forcefully taken sides with a private employer against the federal government as to drive the agents of the government into another state.

IT IS pertinent to note that the state to which the NLRB is obnoxious is likewise the state in which the campaign of vigilante terrorism against the share-cropper and tenant-farmer unions has been most virulent. It is also the state that has provided the New Deal with its Senate floor leader, Joseph T. Robinson, a hog-caller who missed his calling. These circumstances combine to suggest that Arkansas would make an excellent starting place for the impending Senatorial investigation of all the more acute manifestations of incipient fascism in this country. A resolution directing the Senate Education and Labor Committee to "make an investigation of violations of the right of free speech and assembly and undue interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively" has been introduced by Senator La Follette and referred for consideration to a subcommittee which he heads.

Hearings are soon to be held on whether the resolution should be adopted by the Senate, and they will provide almost as large a field for the taking and publicizing of testimony on the question of violations of civil liberties as a full-fledged investigation. In fact, that is what the forces behind the resolution had in mind when they conspired with Senator La Follette to introduce it. Their plans have been laid carefully and if they are not upset by La Follette's colleagues on the subcommittee—Murphy of Iowa and Thomas of Utah—they will result in a mass of evidence compelling the Senate to authorize a real investigation by a committee empowered to sit during the recesses of Congress, subpoena witnesses and records, and draft remedial legislation. In the preparation of the case for such an investigation and in the prosecution of the investigation itself, La Follette will have his first major opportunity to prove himself a worthy son of his father and a man fit for national leadership.

The NLRB's records with their copious evidence of labor espionage are to be tapped first in the impending hearings. Then the church groups, Jew and Gentile, are to be heard, followed by the representatives of such organizations as the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Anti-Semitism, lynch law, Ku Kluxery, and the nicer forms of fascism practiced by the overlords of our universities and colleges against free-thinking students and faculty members are at last to have the sort of day in court that they deserve. In the process the federal government will not escape its rightful share of excoriation, according to present plans, for at the tail end of the hearings are to come the spokesmen for the cotton share-croppers, the sugar-beet workers, the Ohio onion pickers, the Jersey vegetable and fruit workers, and all those other millions of agricultural laborers to whom the New Deal's farm-relief plans seem never to apply.

Representatives of those veritable New Deal phenomena, the farm-labor unions, have just completed a two-day conference here with officials of the AAA, WPA, and Resettlement Administration. The conference, arranged by the National Committee on Rural Social Planning, was singularly unproductive. It served only to place on public exhibit the almost psychopathic fear of the New Deal's luminaries that the nation's farm hands, tenant farmers, and share-croppers may by collective effort attain sufficient power to force the government to choose between them and their exploiters, the landlords of the South and West, to whom the Administration looks for the votes necessary to its reelection. They made no promises, and around the specific cases laid before them of AAA, WPA, and RA field agents conniving with the farm-belt Legrees against the croppers and farm hands they danced like dervishes, seeking only to avoid contact with the facts. The high panjandrums of the WPA carried their tremors to the point of absenting themselves from the conference, and Secretary Wallace, when cornered on the question of the farm hand's and tenant farmer's right to live, could deliver himself of only a warning: "Frankly, that's dynamite," he said.

BRIEFER Mention. The Administration's anxiety to keep farm production curtailed and benefit checks pouring out to farmers has provided a ludicrous spectacle here. The AAA rushed out an announcement of the new farm program before its officials had agreed upon or understood clearly how the program was to work. Secretary Wallace and his aides blushed and joined in the laughter when they found their own explanations of the thirteen-page announcement in frequent conflict during an hour-long press conference at which they tried one explanation after another. Having to pretend that the "soil-conservation" program is not essentially the same as the outlawed "adjustment" program was the cause of all their difficulties. . . . Bilbo, who was expected to succeed Huey Long as the Senate's oratorical ball of fire, delivered his maiden speech a few days ago. The Kingfish's shoes are still empty. Bedecked in a gray suit, diamond horseshoe stickpin, green tie, purple pocket handkerchief, and white gardenia, Bilbo spoke for five and a half hours and succeeded only in emptying the galleries.

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# *The Soviets Face the Threat of War*

BY LOUIS FISCHER

*Moscow, March 1*

THE Soviet Union is the only country in Europe where intensive armament activity coincides with a sharp rise in the living standards of the nation. The tremendous sacrifices made by every Soviet citizen during the first Five-Year Plan (1929-32) today pay a dividend not only in the form of more consumption but also in security for Russia against attack. The Soviet Union, thanks to its new industries, has become a military giant. Yet the diversion of energy and materials to the making of expensive weapons of destruction is regrettable, and but for it the U. S. S. R. would be much farther along. However, there is a cardinal difference between the war preparations of the Soviets and of other countries. A considerable part of Russia's defense activities consists in building peace-time instruments which enhance its military might. Thus tractor factories are required to raise agricultural yield, mechanize farming, and foster collectivization; but they can also make tanks. Siberia must have railways to exploit its fabulous natural resources; those same railways are a bulwark against invasion. In Russia enlarged industrial capacity yields military strength as a by-product. Elsewhere countries whose difficulties arise from excess industrial capacity are forced to swell it solely for war purposes. The expense to their economies, accordingly, is heavier than appears in budgetary figures. The work of upbuilding, begun in Soviet Russia seven years ago, continues unabated, indeed, is being accelerated. It warrants the prediction that before many years Russia's value as a diplomatic partner and ally will be vastly higher than it is today. The realization of this is dawning in the West.

A strong Russia strengthens collective security and helps to avert war. The Bolsheviks do not need a war, would only be disturbed by a war. The proof of it is simple; they say to the nations, if we become aggressive you can all unite to stop us. Let us unite similarly against any government which attacks one of us. In such unity lies the greatest possible measure of war prevention.

Soviet acceptance of the collective-security principle has lent firmness to the League of Nations and encouraged the advocates of peace and the defenders of the status quo. To the Russians the unfortunate European status quo was formerly as repugnant as the League of Nations. The League was the symbol and tail of Versailles. It represented the humiliation of defeated Germany. But it ceased to do that when Hitler annulled Versailles. Hitler thus opened the door to Russia's entry into the League. Hitler's first step was negative—he erased the irksome discriminations imposed by the peace treaty. His next step was aggressive—he made Germany a threat to world tranquillity. Any attempt to revise the map of Europe means war. In such an event Germany—if internal social difficulties did not intervene—would be more than a match for any single European power. The safety of the European powers, therefore, lies in combinations which will offset Germany's superiority. This is the germ idea of collective security. This is the chief reason why the Nazis object to collective security.

The only practical alternative to collective security is madly intensified military preparations to meet any contingency. Moscow has earnestly endeavored to put iron into the League's blood and to cement its ties with London, Paris, and the Little Entente. But because it cannot fully trust in the aid the powers may give at a critical moment, it places final reliance on its own armed forces. (All League members which can afford it are pursuing a similar policy.)

The great defense problem of the U. S. S. R. is the 38,000 miles of its sea and land frontier and the 6,000 miles which separate its eastern from its western boundary. These tremendous distances preclude rapid and appreciable transfers of men or equipment from one front to another, and necessitate the maintenance of two huge army establishments, the first to cope with a possible Japanese offensive, the second to guard the Finnish-Esthonian-Latvian-Polish-Rumanian line. Though all these matters are extremely difficult to gauge, it is almost certain that Japan will not dare to attack the formidable Soviet position in the Far East unless it is confident of cooperation against the Bolsheviks from a Western power. Despite the length of the Soviet-Manchurian frontier, steel-concrete fortifications and several hundred thousand soldiers supplied with the best modern arms would seriously impede a Japanese incursion. And any Soviet-Japanese war would be extremely expensive and menacing to Japan. Manchuria is still full of "bandits"; China is seething, impotently but seething nevertheless. A disaffected rear could easily create an ugly situation for a Japanese army bent on advancing into Siberia or Outer Mongolia. Moreover, Soviet aeroplanes can bomb the inflammable cities of Japan. Some experts dispute this. The Japanese, whose information is of the best, fear it.

In recent months numerous grave affrays have occurred on the Soviet-Manchurian and Mongolian-Manchurian frontiers. They could conceivably lead to war but probably will not. No Japanese national interest is involved in these disputed areas. The difficulty is adjustable through local commissions or diplomatic negotiations, and since both parties seem to be impressed with the seriousness of the situation there is reason to suppose that an open conflict can be averted. Certain Tokyo circles may have welcomed anti-Soviet action and foreign tension as a fitting accompaniment to parliamentary election and budget debate,

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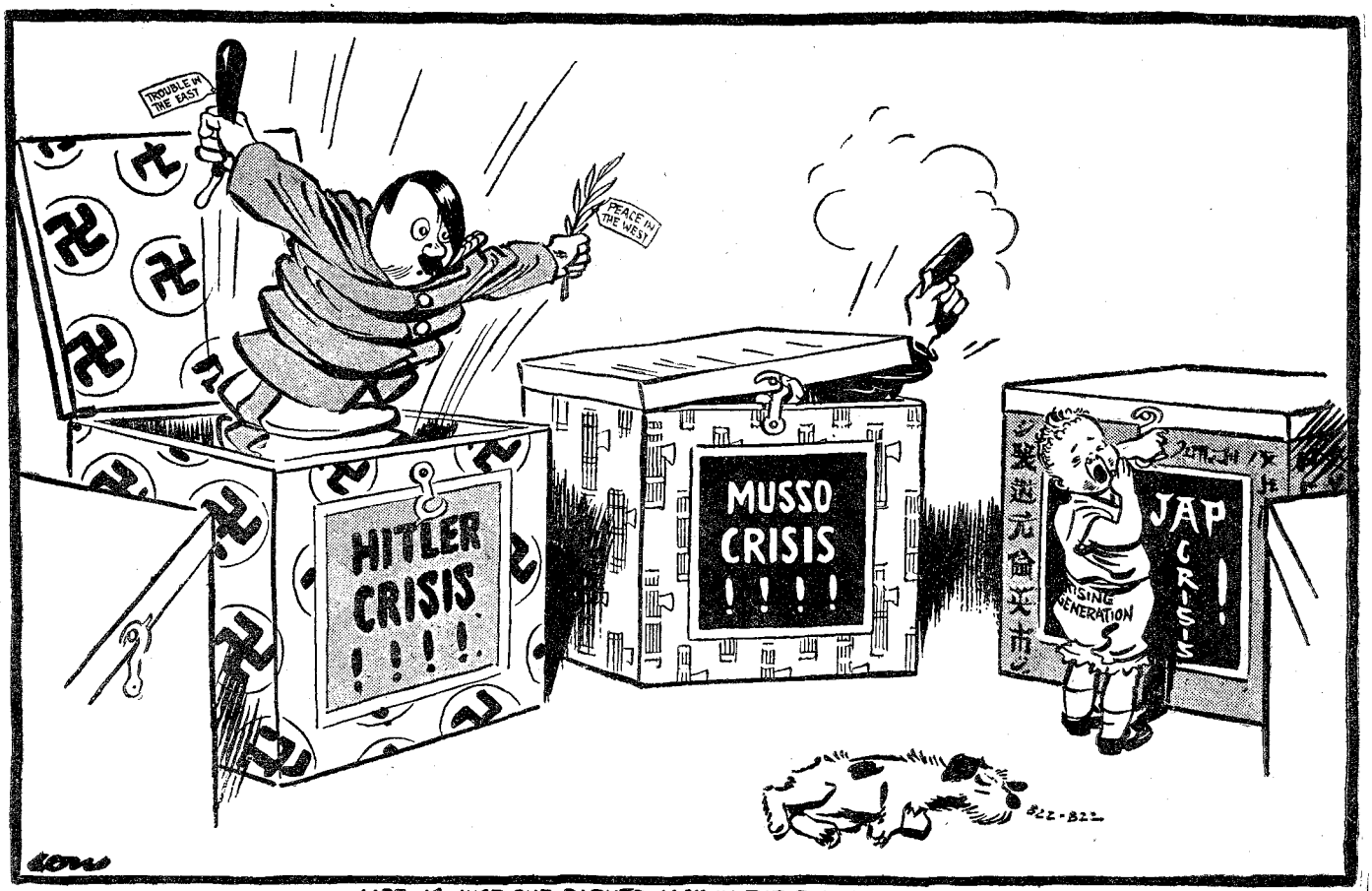
but wiser counsels decry this playing with fire. A large body of public opinion in Japan and many prominent statesmen want peace with the U. S. S. R., because war might be national suicide and because Japan can get as much territory as it wants in China, where it has as yet met no Chinese resistance and surprisingly little Anglo-American opposition. Nevertheless, militant Japanese elements yearn for an opportunity to strike at Siberia or Outer Mongolia. These elements do not dominate today, but an unfortunate incident might be exploited by them to stimulate national hysteria and suddenly plunge the country into war.

Even an eventual settlement on the frontiers, however, would not eliminate the perpetual explosiveness of the Soviet-Japanese situation. Japanese moderates with whom I have had interviews in Europe admit that those persons in Japan and Manchoukuo who today are powerless to precipitate a Soviet war might quickly gain the upper hand if Germany and Poland took the offensive. In such a conjuncture the temptation for the Japanese to participate would be well-nigh irresistible. Just as the Japanese might readily avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by a Western invasion, so the Germans might be glad to follow if Japan struck first. That being the case, it would be much better for them to agree in advance on coordinated if not necessarily simultaneous action. Whether or not a German-Japanese alliance exists, this is the logic of German-Japanese collaboration. A Soviet-German war or a Soviet-Japanese war would inevitably become both, and then the powers wedded to the status quo would have to chose between intervention and a possible strengthening of two major revisionist nations. Faced by a mighty adversary on either flank, the U. S. S. R., if unaided, would obviously be hard put. Any weakening of Russia—and of course Russia's defeat—would result in a disastrous European situation for England and France and in a threatening Asiatic situation for England and America. Even the assumed setback to the world Communist movement would not counterbalance this great disadvantage. The U. S. S. R., France, England, and America therefore are natural partners. Indeed, despite the sensational nature of the Soviet-Japanese border engagements, the main direction of Japan's forward trend is into China, where British interests are more vitally involved than Soviet interests. It is not difficult to imagine a combination of circumstances in which Britain would be happy to enjoy Soviet cooperation in the Far East.

Relations between England and Russia have improved and will probably improve further. It has been the central aim of German diplomacy to prevent this evolution. Berlin has made no secret of it. Germany wants to win British friendship today that it may thereby deter England from entering a war against Germany tomorrow. With England neutral, France is weaker and Germany is master. And the more military strength Germany has and the nearer it draws to Italy, Japan, Poland, and Hungary, the more London and Paris will fear it and the more they will cultivate Moscow. Moscow, Paris, and London form a natural triangle, and if its legs are firm it can prevent war. In the intervening period—before it is ready to commit itself to this policy of war prevention—Britain will endeavor not to antagonize Germany and yet maintain good




LIFE IS JUST ONE DARNED JACK-IN-THE-BOX AFTER ANOTHER.

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relations with the Kremlin. But any doubt as to Britain's ultimate attitude encourages warlike tendencies in Europe. To discourage them and to buttress the status quo the Kremlin is prepared to consider sympathetically any new scheme for European collective security and would even guarantee Austria's independence if the Austrians wanted it and if a suitable formula could be found. If Italy grows too weak or too bitter to participate in the Anglo-French front, Russia's role in Central European affairs will become a more active one.

Collective-security arrangements, reinforced from above and below, make for peace. But they must be backed by armaments. This is sad yet true; nowadays the words and wishes of the weak are of no avail. Moscow has another weapon in the struggle for peace. Traveling through Europe one discovers considerable latent admiration and affection for the Soviet Union. Workingmen frequently have a special relationship to Bolshevik Russia—this despite all the Comintern's and Profintern's mistakes. In many places intellectuals, impoverished by the bourgeoisie's ideological bankruptcy, still waver because the bourgeoisie is not yet materially bankrupt. They vaguely, instinctively hope that inspiration and renewal will come from the red East. If the Soviet regime became a true popular democracy and granted its artists and writers the freedom indispensable to creative effort, the U. S. S. R. would win so many friends in foreign working and middle classes that its diplomatic position would improve and it would be more secure against invasion. A democratic Soviet Union would mobilize innumerable allies abroad. The Soviet Union is menaced by fascist and near-fascist states; the democracies of England, France, and Czecho-Slovakia are similarly threatened. Some of my cynical Bolshevik friends will ridicule this idealistic approach as a futile one; in the first World War, they will say, England and France were the allies of Czarist Russia. But the Soviets can be more than cannon-fodder reserves for the West. Moreover, the task today is still war prevention, and I believe that the democratization of the U. S. S. R. would weaken the enemies of peace.

# *Red Clay in Alabama*

BY CARLETON BEALS

## I. "Rehabilitation"

*Birmingham, March*

IT IS raining in Alabama—all through the black belt—sluices of it day after day. The unpainted tenant-farmer shacks totter forlornly on the steep sides of deeply eroded fields or in red mud on the edge of loblolly swamps beyond the ragged stalks of last year's cotton crop—the crop that during the pickers' strike brought murder to a dozen counties. We have come for miles along the slick cement highways, new but already cracking up in places—down from Birmingham past blue and tan company huts of smelter workers, on into share-cropper country. A half-decent cottage that shows signs of having been painted even five years ago or that has unbroken windows is so rare that we point and exclaim, like small boys counting white horses. All the way from Chattanooga to Birmingham it is the same dreary spectacle.

Now, farther south, we pass through wretched towns: frowzy brick buildings; dingy clapboard stores with ugly, high, peeling foreheads; a few blocks of smug little homes lifting clean chins above the surrounding welter of unpainted hovels and privies, of garbage, dead dogs, mud holes, and human degradation.

We turn off the main road. Cement gives way to gravel; gravel gives way to slippery red mud. Soon our car is painted with it. The shacks grow worse and worse. Some roads are impassable. We get stuck in the red mud. Share-croppers haul us out. We pass abandoned farms. In this section of the Piedmont area 35 per cent of the farms have been abandoned. It is a long story of agricultural decay, of social collapse, of human degeneracy, "Tobacco Road" style, which began fifty years ago and has not yet ended.

Alabama is still in the grip of the old plantation system, with its barely camouflaged feudalism and serfdom; and the effect of the depression, the temporary collapse of monopoly capitalism, has been worse in this colonial fringe of the nation than in many a truly industrial region. Birmingham was one of the hardest-hit cities in the country. The breakdown of industrial feudalism has aggravated the earlier agricultural breakdown. Now the state faces a third and more serious blow, destruction of its cotton-growing industry. Already the cotton yield per acre in this state is lower than in worn-out Georgia; it is far below the national average; and with the introduction of new mechanical devices, such as the cotton-picker, which demand large flat areas, central and northern Alabama may see its one important cash crop wiped out. Already a large portion of Alabama's population has reached a Central American level in its living standards, with even less food available.

The present condition of the Alabama black belt is the product of a hundred years of agricultural rugged individualism. Because of the plantation system, slavery, and land monopolization, many farms were taken up which were incapable of yielding, under the most just of economic set-ups, a decent living. And under the plantation system even the good land has deteriorated. The tenant has no incentive to terrace his land against erosion, to guard against soil exhaustion, or in any way to improve the land he farms. He may even tear a board from the

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floor of his house and burn it to keep warm for the moment, because he does not know when he will be kicked out. The Federal Resettlement Administration states that at least 75,000,000 acres of existing farm lands in the nation are utterly unsuited to agriculture, despite the abandonment of farms and the increasing conversion of farmers into tenants and share-croppers. Perhaps the worst spots in the country are the submarginal cotton lands from Georgia to Arkansas.

Immediate remedies have been sought. Crop restriction helped to maintain prices and thus save the commission merchants and the banks. Farmers were compensated for reducing the acreage cultivated, though in the South, in divers ways, this compensation has all gone into the pockets of the owners of land, leaving the cropper and tenant in a more desperate plight than almost any other agricultural population in the world.

The Resettlement Administration has estimated that in the entire country at least 27,000,000 acres of submarginal lands must be taken out of cultivation immediately. At the same time 25,000,000 additional acres of crop lands must be found to supply the country's future food requirements—on the assumption that unemployment will cease and that purchasing power will be restored. Thus three major purposes motivate the "land-utilization" projects—the conservation and fullest use of land resources, assistance to poverty-stricken dependents on unproductive land to sell out and obtain more profitable locations, reorganization of local public finances which because of tax delinquencies are inadequate to maintain roads, schools, and other public services. This last is the soundest phase of the resettlement work.

There are four dots on the map of Alabama to show where resettlement projects are located. Two of these projects are purely agricultural. That at Tuskegee, largely for Negroes, is considered one of the most hopeful in the country. Some years back it was planned to acquire a hundred thousand acres. The acreage gradually shrank, and after a long delay option was finally taken on about 9,000 acres. But permission to buy even this reduced acreage has not yet been given. Meanwhile the men are engaged in erosion work, most of them for $19 a month. Even if this limited Hull House enterprise, excellent though it is, is finally carried to completion, it will benefit only 139 families!

This "fundamental" program was worked out because of general rural destitution in the country. In 1934—and in most places conditions have not appreciably improved since then—a total of at least 4,500,000 rural inhabitants were being kept from starvation by handouts of local, state, and federal agencies or by rural rehabilitation work. Many of these, particularly in the Alabama black belt, are still migrating from place to place, camping out, living in frightful economic and sanitary conditions.

Under the more temporary rehabilitation plan the government rented land from the owners, paying them good prices for what was often their worst land. The government then provided its tenant with food credits at the high-binder plantation stores, bought him a plow, seed, fertilizer, and a work animal. For Negroes this work animal was a steer; for whites, who refused to take steers, a mule was provided. These provisions of course are charged against the account of the tenant, and if they are at times excessive, he is, on the other hand, relieved from sharing his crop with the landlord, though he pays rent.

The Negro tenants are known as "steer farmers." According to the official report, the steer is "the orneriest of all work critters," and most of the rehabilitation steers are wild and too young to be of much use. One poor farmer's steer bolted through two fences, plow and all, and hasn't been heard of since. But the "acid test," declares the official report, "of the applicant's sincerity of purpose in his willingness to accept a steer." Just why the same "sincerity of purpose" is not demanded of whites the report does not explain.

"I'd rather be in the penitentiary than be a steer farmer," one Negro rehabilitation tenant told me.

I had walked through mud and rain to his miserable one-room shack with its gaping holes in floor, walls, and roof. Roy Robertson—I suppress his real name since I do not wish to expose him to lynching or to maltreatment and persecution by local or federal officials—is six feet tall and weighs two hundred pounds. He is from Chambers County. He cannot read or write, but he is intelligent and independent in spirit, qualities which are terrible handicaps for a Negro in the South. He is a hard worker who brought in bumper crops on the very inferior land the government temporarily provided for him.

During 1934, although Robertson received a very young steer, he made a go of things; and though the authorities took all his cotton and his government rent and parity checks, he managed to feed his brood of eight children. He was never able to get any exact statement, but he was told he had cleared his debt. In 1935 he got another, bigger steer, some fertilizer and seed, and for a few months a check for $6; he was given about eight acres of very inferior land for $15 rent, a conventional sum to be advanced to the landowner by the government. Robertson also worked sixty-six days on the government erosion project to pay his rent. During that time he claims that he drew only $2.40 for victuals for himself and family; the remainder due him, $82.02, was presumably paid against his indebtedness.

Presently, however, the landlord, though the government was the renter, demanded $24 more directly from Robertson for wood, water, pasturage, and house rent. These charges were unheard of before rehabilitation came. Now the owner steps in past the federal authorities and imposes imaginary debts and obligations. If the tenant becomes obstreperous, he is likely to be chased off his farm. Many "rehabilitated" farmers have merely exchanged one bad master for two worse ones.

Robertson, however, protested against the extra charge to the federal authorities in Auburn, Alabama. For his presumption he was "cussed out" and told that "a nigger who won't pay his water rent is no account." Robertson didn't have a cent because the government had taken all his cash crop, his wages, and his federal payments, but Negro neighbors as poor as himself gave him work so that he could make a payment of $9 and not be evicted.

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Presently, Federal Field Foreman Jennings, the terror of the croppers of this county, demanded that Robertson sign a mortgage on all his possessions. Robertson, believing he had paid all his debts, refused. Jennings gave Robertson ten days to get off the land, but promised that he would make "a fair settlement" by taking everything he owned "except his 'taters." Robertson demanded a statement, which he never got.

Previously Robertson had sent various protests directly to Montgomery. Nothing came of them. One of his letters, he claims, never got out of Chambers County, for within an hour Jennings was "bawling him out," bragging to his neighbors that "niggers" who protested wouldn't even be left with bed and chairs. Jennings also pointed out that even the federal investigation of himself "by that sonnova bich of a Northern man who came down here" had come to nothing.

Ten days after Jennings's notice, the sheriff came in the dead of night and took Robertson's twin plow, two plow stocks, two steers, harness, two 50-gallon barrels full of syrup, a bale of cotton seed, 400 bales (pounds?) of fodder, 40 bushels of corn—this list is copied from the official order—and, as Robertson added, "even the children's braid." Ten bushels of corn were left to keep Robertson's family from starving.

With the thermometer at four degrees above zero Robertson moved his sick wife and eight children through snow and ice to a little shack owned by a Negro friend. All his supplies for the season are gone; his work animals are gone; he has nothing. Before he was "rehabilitated" he did have something. The authorities were generous enough to offer him an impossible job in Montgomery for $19 a month. But Montgomery is five hours away by car and Robertson has no car. He was called "no account" for refusing.

At a reasonable estimate the government took away from Roy Robertson at least $140 worth of goods; it has made no accounting on his three bales of cotton totaling 1,525 pounds, which at the guaranteed twelve-cent price would net him $183. It took his sixty-six days of labor. The government has taken from him at least $405, not including rent and parity checks.

The average cost of rehabilitating a farmer is officially put at slightly more than $90. In this figure is included the cost of equipping white farmers, which often runs to twice this amount or more. What Robertson actually received I don't know. He can't get a statement. I was given no access to his account. But the federal books are sure to balance nicely. Robertson's steers, as is common practice, were sold at the first crossroads "to them Wadley boys" for what they would bring; he does not know how much. Five truck loads of federal steers were recently sent into Montgomery and sold for meat. For the next batch of farmers, however, the government buys new steers and other goods at market prices, in some cases perhaps the very goods that have just been sold for a song. There are also ugly stories of how local white farmers bag the confiscated supplies of the "swept-clean" rehabilitated farmers, how oftentimes part of a consignment of supplies is dropped off by the wayside at a door where it does not belong.

I asked Robertson if others were in the same fix? He insisted that practically all the rehabilitated farmers in the county have been cleaned out. "Go ask Mrs. Otis Anders. She worked on the erosion project sixty-six days, she turned over three bales of cotton and half a bale of seed. Ask Ernest Holloway, who's got five children. Ask Johnny Robertson. The sheriffs come in the dead of night, and him with a sick wife and kids, and they had no place to go, and she had to sit out there in the cold for days. They took every single thing he owned and three bales of cotton. Ask Mr. Robins. He's been looking for a month for a roof to squat under. Ask Mrs. Mason. She'll tell you straight out what they done to her."

I talked to some of those he mentioned and to many others. In some counties the process has been less drastic, but essentially rehabilitation, even when it is honestly administered, is a snare and a tragic joke. It is a pouring of water into a sieve. The well-intentioned bureaucrats who administer it have no appreciation of spiritual and moral factors; they are relentless mechanisms concerned only with making the books balance and doing it even more ruthlessly than it was done under the old plantation owner, whose methods are slavishly copied.

[*This is the first of two articles on rehabilitation by Carleton Beals. The second will appear next week.*]

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# The Second Johnstown Flood

BY MAXWELL S STEWART

*Johnstown, Pennsylvania, March 23*

I THOUGHT that I had steeled myself against the shock of seeing my home town ravaged by disaster. As my train crawled cautiously up the Juniata valley, I had seen automobiles, stoves, bathtubs, beds, davenports, and the remnants of houses scattered along the stream bed. At one place near Tyrone I had even seen a huge gas tank tilted crazily against a bridge that restrained its further passage toward the Susquehanna. Coming down the Conemaugh I had noted disquieting evidences of the torrent which engulfed Johnstown. But despite this advance warning, despite all that I had read and the pictures I had seen, I was completely unprepared for the spectacle of devastation which confronted me.

The emotional shock which this produced was not allayed when I was set upon by a state trooper who peremptorily challenged my right to visit my own city. After being subjected to a series of rapid-fire questions, several of them repeated with the obvious intent of trapping me, I was released to proceed under guard through the city to my home. The bristling bayonets of the militia and the domineering attitude of omnipresent state police accentuated the feeling that I had suddenly dropped into a war zone. High banks of black mud, piles of timber and discarded furniture, and broken windows contributed to the atmosphere of the barricade.

In the heart of the city, where the flood had been eighteen feet deep, there was not a building which appeared habitable. Water was still standing in some of the streets. Merchants and householders had dumped the entire contents of their basements and ground floors into the gutters. Men were engaged in shoveling black muck out of stores, homes, and churches. On the streets the mud was being piled and hauled away as if it were snow from last winter's blizzards. Yet despite this intense activity, the long rows of empty houses created a never-to-be-forgotten air of desolation. It was as if the life had gone out of the city, leaving only an empty shell.

Comparisons between the St. Patrick's Day flood of 1936 and the famous deluge of May 31, 1889, are difficult because of the fundamental dissimilarity of the two catastrophes. The first Johnstown flood was essentially a man-made affair. There had been exceptionally heavy rains and the rivers had overflowed their banks, but the disaster itself, which claimed more than 2,200 lives, was the direct result of the bursting of a crude, earthen dam some ten miles above the city. Responsibility for the calamity could be placed entirely upon a group of wealthy Pittsburghers who had built the dam for recreational purposes. The huge loss of life was accounted for by the suddenness with which the torrent descended on the city.

This time the waters claimed less than a dozen lives, but because of the increased size of the city and because a larger section was inundated, the property loss, estimated at $30,000,000, has been far greater. In this case, however, man was in no way responsible for the disaster. The valleys leading into Johnstown are honeycombed with reservoirs but their usefulness for purposes of flood prevention was nullified by the fact that they were completely filled. Nor would reforestation have been of any aid as far as Johnstown is concerned. On the contrary, the fact that most of the hills are wooded probably prevented the snow from melting a week or two earlier. Though it rained steadily for over twenty-four hours, the rain alone would not have caused the river to overflow its banks. But the combination of heavy rains, an unprecedented amount of snow, ground that was frozen beneath the surface, and rivers that were already high provided conditions such as might not occur again for a century. Nothing that man could have done would have altered these circumstances appreciably.

The story of the flood and its immediate consequence has been so fully reported in the press that the details must be familiar to millions. The river rose so unexpectedly that hundreds of persons were trapped in the downtown department stores and office buildings. Thousands of families were separated and the members were unable to locate one another until long after the waters had subsided. In one family of my acquaintance the mother, father, and two children were trapped in four widely separated portions of the city, none able to get word to the others. Communications of every sort were paralyzed. It will be weeks before street-car service can be resumed. Travel by car from one section of town to another was out of the question during the flood, and is now only possible for those holding passes countersigned by the state police. One man had to drive seventy miles to get from one side of the city to the other.

Despite the suffering and discomfort of the city's 10,000 homeless, conversation centers chiefly on the multitude of peculiar pranks played by the waters. One woman tells, for example, of putting a chair on top of the piano before retreating to the upper stories. After the flood receded, the chair was still in place, but the top of the piano was missing. My uncle reports having sold an old green truck to a friend in a part of town about two miles distant, and finding the faithful old machine after the flood within a hundred yards of his house. One side of a double house was clogged with sand and dirt; the other was swept clean—of everything, including the side of the house.

As is always the case, the burden of the disaster has fallen upon those least able to bear it. It is true that the downtown business men have suffered heavily. Flood in-

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surance was practically unknown despite the catastrophe of 1889. But where the well-to-do suffered business losses, the working class lost everything when their homes were gutted by the flood. A few wealthy families lived in the downtown section, but the vast majority of the middle- and upper-class families had their homes either in Southmont or Westmont—400 feet above the valley—or in higher sections of the residential suburbs. The districts where the water was the highest—Cambria City, Kernville, and parts of the downtown section—were distinctly working-class districts. Practically all of the loss of life occurred in these areas. A large proportion of the houses damaged in these sections were already unfit for human habitation, but unless the government takes advantage of the opportunity to launch a large-scale housing project, the old buildings will simply be scraped out, repapered, and rerented to the thousands who cannot afford, on steelworker's wages, to pay rents in more desirable parts of town.

For those who escaped actual inundation, the prospects are fairly hopeful. Although the great steel plants which provide Johnstown's chief source of income are for the moment prostrate, they are employing more men for the process of cleaning up than they have had on their pay rolls since 1929. The immediate task of digging the city out of the mud has been carried out—and carried out brilliantly—by the WPA and CCC, but both business and labor are bound to benefit by the new construction which will be necessary in the coming months. Contractors, dealers in household furnishings, and automobile salesmen are doubtless looking forward to a period of unprecedented activity. It is one of the paradoxes of our economic system that a disaster is necessary to bring even an approximation of full employment.

Unfortunately, a catastrophe of this type tends to involve a redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top. Some individuals will doubtless lose their jobs altogether; and for the vast majority of those who were washed out by the flood the reconstruction boom will only mean that money normally used for food and clothing will be diverted to household goods. Wages in the steel mills are fixed nationally, and will not be responsive to the inevitable rise in local prices. Government funds will probably be made available for the business man and home-owners either as outright gifts or as loans at low rates of interest, but it is extremely doubtful whether it will be possible for the average worker, who is unable to put up security of any kind, to take advantage of this kind of assistance. At the moment reasonably adequate relief is being granted those who lost everything in the flood, but the aid is on a chaotic basis. No assurance has been given that the destitute will continue to receive help until they are once more capable of full self-support. So far the Red Cross has done somewhat better than in the case of the Mississippi floods, but in view of the extent of the inundated areas it is evident that no private agency can hope to cope with the problem. The fact that none of the government's many alphabetical agencies were equipped to meet the relief problem dramatizes with peculiar effectiveness the need for a really comprehensive social-security program. Surely the cost of such disasters should be assumed by the country as a whole.

# *General Strike in Damascus*

BY ALBERT VITON

*Jerusalem, February 19*

I WAS arrested by the French secret police on the Beirut-Damascus train before arriving in Damascus, and was shipped back, guarded by four black French-African soldiers under a French superior, to the Palestine frontier. I cannot, therefore, give a first-hand account of how Damascus looks after a general strike that has lasted thirty-two days. But I have spoken in Beirut and elsewhere with enough Damascenes to get a fairly complete picture.

For the last thirty-two days not a shop, not a restaurant, not a cafe, not a theater has been open in Damascus. Not a worker has been at his bench; not a clerk at his desk. At the Hejaz station I could not even get a porter to transfer my luggage from one train to another, and French-African troops, which have been pouring into Syria, are doing the work of porters for complaining foreigners. At least 2,000 persons have been arrested; every newspaper has been suppressed; martial law has been declared; people must not be seen walking more than two together; and Moroccan, Algerian, and Senegalese troops are in control. So complete has been the strike, as I was informed by a French official in Beirut, that even the Damascene thieves have been striking! Not a single robbery or hold-up has occurred in Damascus since the strike began.

Of course, all the Damascene merchants are bankrupt. No notes have been paid for a month, and a Beirut lawyer told me that at least 50,000 notes have been protested. Syrian business life is at a standstill. Custom receipts for the first twenty-five days of the strike were a little less than 5,000 Syrian pounds, while for the same period last year they were more than 80,000 Syrian pounds.

A foreigner arriving in Damascus without any Arab friends is likely to starve. Food simply cannot be bought. The native population is supplied with corn, oil, olives, and *leboni* (a thick curdled milk which keeps better than butter), all of which are stored away by every Arab family each summer. Rich families with large food supplies have been distributing food to their less fortunate neighbors.

Damascus is not alone in the fight. All Syria is closed, and many cities in Lebanon. Beirut has come out in a sym-

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pathetic strike, as have Sidon, Tyre, and most other Lebanese villages. Homs, Aleppo, Hamma, Tripoli—the largest cities in Syria—have been striking with Damascus.

Why have almost three million persons imposed upon themselves the ordeal of hunger and bankruptcy? The answer is that Syria is determined to shake off the French yoke. In 1925-27 the Syrians fought the French with arms and inflicted heavy blows upon the mandatory power, but the French finally won by superior military force. At that time the Syrians still had ammunition from the World War. Today they have no ammunition at all. The French have seen to that. Peaceful striking is the only alternative.

The French have not always been so detested in Syria. The French mandate, indeed, was imposed after the Syrians had requested it. They then spoke of "our French cousins." Today I cannot find a single Syrian, Christian or Moslem, who has a good word for the French.

An illuminating explanation of this change was given me in an interview with Michel Beik Zakur. Michel Beik has been a member of the Lebanese Parliament for many years, has been in Syrian public life for more than a quarter of a century, and is the editor of the suppressed *Maarad*. "For one thing," he said, "the French have suppressed all the liberties of the people. I am not exaggerating when I say that today we are less free than we were under Turkish rule. The slightest criticism of the existing regime is sufficient to land a man in one of the innumerable new fortresses and prisons the French have built since the war. Do you know how many Syrians are locked up in them for nothing more terrible than a few words? No, you don't. Neither do I; but there are thousands. Do you know in how many homes the secret police have suddenly appeared and informed someone in the family that he must leave the country within twenty-four hours? In thousands. Our national parliament is no longer a democratic body. The members represent nobody but the French government. Since the present High Commissioner abolished our constitution by decree a few years ago, we have no other judicial basis than another decree of the Commissioner. Our parliament, furthermore, is composed of twenty-five members, a third directly appointed by the French, and the other two-thirds, with the exception of four or five, indirectly appointed. But even this French-picked body has no power. We are allowed to discuss only one subject, the budget, and that we can increase but not decrease. Duties, taxation, internal administration, foreign policy, trade, education—all these are outside our province. And even in this mockery of a Parliament sits a French vice-president who disciplines us as if we were school children."

After this interview, which described the political grievances of the Syrians against the French, I spoke to many merchants and persons who have made a study of Syrian economics. Before the war Syria was considered one of the wealthiest parts of the Ottoman Empire. Today it is starving. I have seen peasants eating bread made of corn husks. When I pointed out that if they had the husks, they must also have had the corn, I was told that heavy taxes levied to maintain a costly foreign government force them to sell the corn and make their bread from the husks.

To describe in detail the economics of imperialism would take us far afield. But the profits of imperialism are much greater than one would suspect from reading official reports and tables of statistics. Take the tariff, for example. France is prevented by the terms of the mandate from officially giving Syrian products any tariff preference. But the terms of the mandate cannot prevent France from manipulating the tariff in such a way as to give its own products the preference. In order to force the Syrians to import French woolens, the tariff was suddenly changed from a duty on measure to one on weight; to stop the importation of American cars, the tariff is no longer levied on horse-power, as it is almost everywhere else in the world, but—since French cars are much lighter than American cars—on weight. Less conspicuous measures, such as keeping goods in warehouses until their seasonal worth is destroyed, and unofficially advising importers that it would be "better" to buy French, are also employed.

The country itself does not benefit from the tariffs. Most of the proceeds from duties and other taxes go to maintain a huge military machine which would be superfluous if Syria were independent. Moreover, an army of Frenchmen, paupers at home and recruited mainly from the worst elements of the population, are living off the fat of the land. I made a list of the higher employees in the Ministry of Justice and found that forty-odd Frenchmen were paid four times as much as the 220 highest native employees.

Extensive public-works projects are undertaken either because a French company wants a contract or because the French government needs them for its own purposes, without the slightest reference to the good of the country. Vast sums are being spent at the moment on enlarging the Beirut harbor, although the present harbor facilities are more than sufficient for Syrian needs. Before the war the harbor was used to its full capacity, when all the commerce of Iraq, Arabia Saudia, Trans-Jordania, and a good deal of the commerce of Palestine flowed through Beirut. But today these countries have ceased sending goods through Syria because of the murderous duties; yet the harbor is being enlarged. Why? Because France might need it as a military port and because a French company, the Sercu del Port, saw in it a good source of profit. Even French engineers have been imported to do the work, although Syria has a number of highly qualified native engineers, most of them unemployed. Most of the roads built by the French were constructed in the same manner —that is, not because they were needed by the inhabitants but because they might be of military advantage. This is also the case with the Tripoli airport now being constructed. And all these vast expenditures of public funds are being made while scores of villages are without a doctor, without a pharmacy, without a school.

The outcome of the present strike is, of course, certain. It may last another week, perhaps even another month; then it must come to an end. But the struggle is not over. It will begin again before the year is out, and although it may take a different form it will express no less earnestly the widespread disaffection which French imperialism has brought to Syria.

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# Issues and Men

BY OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

MY UNQUALIFIED admiration has been won by Lewis J. Gorin, Princeton, '36, who conceived the brilliant idea of founding the Veterans of Future Wars. Incorporated under the laws of the state of New Jersey, this organization has spread like wildfire. Three days after it was started there were no less than thirty "posts" in as many colleges, and by the time these lines appear in print there will probably be a hundred. Its sister organization, the Future Gold Star Mothers, is growing just as rapidly in the women's colleges. A national office has been opened in Princeton, where a thousand students attended the first rally. Congressman Maury Maverick, who spent a year and more in hospitals, has had part of five vertebrae removed, and is rarely free from pain because of the injury done him in France by a German bullet, has volunteered to introduce a bill in the House to pay a $1,000 bonus to every man under the age of thirty-six years who expects to be drafted in the next war and to pay the expenses of every woman under thirty-six for a trip to Europe to visit the probable site of her future sons' graves.

Well, I was at first inclined to consider this stroke of genius just a magnificent joke, a superb piece of youthful badinage, a most clever piercing by irony of the armor of our bonus grabbers. I thanked heaven that at last the war-makers were assailed by the deadliest of weapons—ridicule. But the more I ponder on it the more convinced I am that there is something more to Mr. Gorin's movement. Why should not the young men of America who are going to be drafted into the next war without being asked whether or not they wish to die in France or Manchuria get something out of it before their lives are snuffed out, or they are chosen to carry bullets in their spines for their remaining years, or they end their existence as hopeless cripples, without arms or legs, in some hidden hospital which no outsiders are permitted to visit? Certainly the government ought to give them $1,000 right now. Certainly the young women who are to give birth to the cannon fodder of the future ought to have a trip to Europe or Asia now before their parental anxiety and suffering begin. It does not matter that the day for the next war has not yet been set. The country is to spend $1,200,000,000 in the next fiscal year for armaments. That means war and nothing else.

Mr. Gorin has already drawn blood. James E. Van Zandt, National Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, squealed with pain way out in Salt Lake City. To him Mr. Gorin and his aides are nothing but a "bunch of monkeys." These future veterans, the gallant Commander averred, "are too yellow to go to war. Therefore they will never be veterans of a future war." Mr. Van Zandt forgets, in his bitter hurt, that they will be drafted and have to go, whether they are yellow or blue or white. Mr. Gorin knew just the right answer to make to this. He properly called Mr. Van Zandt a "red" (in the pay of Moscow?) for thus deprecating the valor and patriotism of America's future soldiers. If that precious sedition bill which the army and navy have been trying to get Congress to pass were now a law, it might well be that Mr. Van Zandt could be proceeded against under its provisions; if its penalties should be merely limited to those creating disaffection in our present soldiers it would obviously be only half the safeguard of our militarism it ought to be. To give the youth of America its $1,000 bonus now will surely make it the more ready to enlist when war comes. Hence, in calling the Veterans of Future Wars yellow Mr. Van Zandt is so palpably dampening the martial spirit of our young men as to make it clear to me that the Army Intelligence Bureau should investigate him and see if he is not secretly a member of the Third International.

As for the Gold Star Mothers, the president of the New York branch, Mrs. Matilda Burling, declares that her chapter will demand "an apology and dissolution of the organization." "Any idea that involves making fun of Gold Star Mothers and their pilgrimage to France is bad taste, anyway," is her anti-climactic conclusion. Now there you have the eternal conflict between youth and age. The latter, unwilling to share its distinctions and emoluments with oncoming youth, seeks to regiment it, to tell it what it should think and do. Do the Gold Star Mothers wish to reserve for themselves the precious patriotic experience that is theirs of having given their sons at their country's behest in the most futile of wars, or are they willing to have others ennobled by this experience? I believe that when Mrs. Burling and her associates think it over they will see how a trip to France now will fill young women with ardor to have their future sons lie in those well-kept cemeteries beneath those white crosses.

But whether I am right or not in feeling that patriotism and the necessity of keeping alive militant manhood in America demand that we should all support the Veterans of Future Wars, I insist that Mr. Gorin has got hold of a most dangerous weapon. Heaven forbid that he should go farther and undertake to poke fun at our army and navy, their pretense of efficiency and their preposterous assertion that they are safeguarding the United States. If anybody should begin to laugh at our brass hats—but no, I forbear to go farther. Not my pen shall portray what would happen. I only want to add, to complete the picture, that Mr. Gorin has picked just the right salute for his society—the fascist salute but *with the palm up* in readiness for Treasury favors to come!

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# BROUN'S PAGE

IT ISN'T true that I like being arrested. In guild activities I have only once been taken into custody, and so far I've never been locked up except in the strike against Hearst's *Wisconsin News*. I am a nervous man and I have a touch of claustrophobia, as well as that other one about open spaces which I can't spell. Being locked up gives you that same uncomfortable sensation which you get when stuck between floors in an elevator. It is the sort of terror which assails a man when he knows that the thing which confines him is mechanical and without the usual human reactions. Cops and electric current have that machine-like rigidity.

One of the most curious things in the world is the manner in which a policeman becomes a cog instead of a cop under certain kinds of pressure. This is particularly true of labor pressure, and it arises in part, I believe, from a bad conscience. By every tradition of background, pay, and hours of employment the roundsman should be an ally of striking groups. And yet he will swing almost at a second's notice into a complete ruthlessness in contact with a picket line. The boys and girls of the *Wisconsin News* know the members of the force a good deal better than is the case in larger cities. In the early days of the strike against Hearst it was a sort of "Jack" and "Bill" and "Butch" greeting between the pickets and the police. And then almost overnight everything changed. Somehow it came to the members of the force and to the leaders of the police that this was actually a strike and not a lark. Newspaper men and women had dared to challenge that thing which the policeman fears, although he hardly understands it. Generally it goes by the name of "authority," and "authority" is a force which says, "Make the workers know their place. Slap them around. Give them a taste of 'due process of law.' Show them what happens to human rights when they begin to impinge on property rights. Show them that Mr. Hearst is mighty and must prevail."

So robot-like does the roundsman become after he has heard the voice of authority that even his sense of humor is frozen into a dull literalness. According to the Chicago *Tribune*, "police said that Broun stepped in front of the patrol wagon, thus obstructing traffic, and then jumped into the conveyance."

Now Milwaukee patrol wagons have only a single entrance and that in the rear—like all police wagons I have ever seen—and therefore the feat ascribed to me suggests an agility to which I must plead not guilty. It has been years since I could make a whirling leap from the front of a car and come clean in through the back. I doubt if I ever could. But it has been gravely so recorded by the Milwaukee police.

The fact of the matter is that I was never officially arrested at all. A picket line of some six hundred persons was parading quite peacefully around the plant. This mass picketing had been carried on every Saturday for a month without violence and without interference by the police. Indeed, there had been larger lines. But by now "authority" had become restive. The order came from somewhere to attack the line and break it up. The pickets were marching two and two. The police endeavored to drive a wedge between them, and without a word of warning began to push men and women all over the sidewalk. They did not use their clubs, but I wasn't pleased suddenly to get a cop's elbow in my middle for no reason which I could see except that it pleased him to do it.

And then three policemen went by roughing up a young fellow who was head office boy on the *Wisconsin News* before the strike. They had him by the collar and were shoving him over to the patrol wagon while he vainly inquired what it was all about. Since I was the ranking guild official I went over to the police captain—at least somebody in gold braid—and asked, "What's this all about?" He would make no answer. "If you want to make a test case of our right to picket," I suggested, "I think you ought to arrest me, since I'm a guild officer." Probably by this time I was getting a little mad, and it is quite likely that I repeated a couple of times, "Come on and arrest me." It is even possible that I threw in a "I dare you to arrest me."

But nobody arrested me. I just walked into the patrol wagon and sat down beside Al. When we got to the station house, the three policemen looked a little puzzled. Al was the only one who had been arrested, but Hymie Polinsky, the guild's photographer, had come along, too. I asked what the charges against us were, but nobody seemed to know, so they just locked us up to be on the safe side. We were searched for weapons, and a rather cursory glance was taken at the papers in our pockets. I think it was a sergeant who manifested quite an interest in a big wad of typewritten material which I had in my coat. "I'm sure you won't be interested in that," I told him. "That's a baseball short short that I tried to sell to *Collier's*." He put it back in my coat. Even the police didn't want it.

After each of us had been locked in a separate cell, along with a drunk the wagon had picked up on its way to the picket line, somebody thought of the fact that a prisoner is entitled to one telephone call. We tried to get it, but nobody would pay any attention. We banged on the walls of the cells, but the jailer would not come. "Let's all holler together 'Man dying!' " somebody suggested. That was discarded because we all agreed that probably the police wouldn't care. A lawyer came to see us, and they wouldn't let him in. Just to make it harder they suddenly jumped my bail from $35 to $125.

Now obviously three hours in a cell is a trivial thing, but even in so short a time an observing reporter can learn quite a lot about the police and labor. As far as I'm concerned the only true charge which lies against me is hitchhiking in the police patrol. HEYWOOD BROUN

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# BOOKS *and the* ARTS

## CHARLES BEARD CONFRONTS HIMSELF

BY MAX LERNER

WHOEVER knows Charles Beard or has heard his lusty sallies against Hearst may resent my going back to a book of his written in 1913. Any attempt to place a man's past work in perspective is always a more or less elaborate process of embalming. And if there is any question of embalming, remember those flashing eyes of his, the kindly yet pointed wit—recall what Randolph Bourne once called Beard's "Olympian anger"—watch him in action at some Senate hearing on railroad reorganization or hear him talk about the regime of the drill-sergeant in Nazi Germany. I had meant to call his great book on the Constitution a classic, and the appearance of a new edition* (which has received all too little notice) gave me, I thought, both occasion and excuse for it. But to speak of a man having written a classic may seem like saying of a French writer that he belongs in the Academy or of any writer that he has become a museum piece. So I shall say instead that Mr. Beard's book not only deals with history but has made history.

The book was an inquiry into the economic interests and pressures behind the framing and ratification of the Constitution. It was a tour de force of historical research. Into it Mr. Beard distilled the debates of the Constitutional Convention, the musty and neglected Treasury records, the yellowed files of contemporary journals. He piled up massive evidence to show that the Constitution was an "economic document"; that it was supported by "substantially all the merchants, money lenders, security holders, manufacturers, shippers, capitalists, and financiers, and their professional associates," while on the other side were "the non-slaveholding farmers and the debtors"; and that the political doctrines which shaped the Constitution were themselves shaped by the economic interests of the convention members. The very title of the book, thrust into the atmosphere of theology which covered the thinking of the day like a pall, showed that a new Higher Criticism had come into existence. For Mr. Beard dared defy all the myths and taboos of the historical scholarship of his day. He dared say that the Founding Fathers may have been business men as well as patriots.

Naturally the book made a stir. A campaign was on. Theodore Roosevelt, who as President had thwacked the trusts with a resonance intended to impress the common people and—incidentally—his own sense of rectitude, was now as candidate seeking to thwack the Supreme Court with similar intent. Mr. Taft, on the other hand, was making speeches in which he averred that there would always be a special niche in heaven for judges. Although on a historical subject, the book by the young Columbia professor of politics became of contemporary moment. Much of what supported the sanctity of the Supreme Court, at that time as today, was the sense of the sanctity of the Constitution. A shattering of constitutional mythologies might mean thus a shattering of judicial mythologies. The book caused a fluttering in the academic dovecotes. Albert Bushnell Hart called it little short of indecent, and other scholars called it Marxian—which served the same purpose. Mr. Beard in his new introduction insists it was neither.

The introduction is of importance, because it brings the Charles Beard of today face to face with the Charles Beard of 1913. Mr. Beard confronts himself and tries to explain his stand on the theory of history. In the process he almost explains it away.

Mr. Beard insists that his economic interpretation was not Marxian but Madisonian. There can be no quarrel with any label he may wish to choose. A number of thinkers from Aristotle to Bentley and Veblen had seen the power of economic interests in the province of government, and its most sensational expression in the American tradition was by James Madison in the famous passage in Number 10 of the Federalist Papers, where it was used to defend the system of checks in the Constitution. And yet, unless it be on purely tactical grounds in order to confound the professional patrioteers, I do not see the cogency of avoiding the Marxist stigma as if it were leprous. The economic interpretation is in Madison a set of brilliant aperçus, but in Marx an intellectual system.

What its place is in Mr. Beard's thinking is difficult to say with any definiteness. When his book was first published there was a tendency to regard it as the lustiest American blast for the economic interpretation of history. But Mr. Beard today evidently has a horror of being thought to dwell too exclusively on the economic aspect of history. "Since this aspect had been so long disregarded," he writes, "I sought to redress the balance by emphasis. . . . I simply sought to bring back into the mental picture of the Constitution those realistic features of economic conflict, stress, and strain which my masters had . . . left out of it, or thrust far into the background as incidental rather than fundamental." Mr. Beard seems to see his work, therefore, as part of a pendulum process in which an equilibrial correctness is achieved by going from excess to excess. He seems thus less in the tradition of the economic interpreters than in that of the "multiple-causation" school of American sociology, which sees history as the product of a vast variety of factors, none having priority over the others. He does not, to be sure, travel

*"An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States." By Charles A. Beard. With a New Introduction. The Macmillan Company. $2.

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the whole road in that direction. "In the great transformations in society," he writes in his introduction, "such as was brought about by the formation and adoption of the Constitution, economic 'forces' are primordial or fundamental, and come nearer 'explaining' events than any other 'forces.' " But surely the whole historic process is one of social transformation. Taken with any precision, Mr. Beard's statement would mean that he restricts the economic interpretation to revolutionary periods, and that for normal periods he would adopt a "broader" interpretation.

All these twistings and turnings may be explained by Mr. Beard's desire to escape any form of determinism in history. He says repeatedly that the economic factor cannot explain history, that all of history cannot explain life. He has a horror of the history writing that was drenched with spiritual unction. In fact, I suspect that much of the reason why Mr. Beard and many of his generation were once attracted by the economic emphasis in history was that it gave them a sweet and secret iconoclastic sense. Like the village atheist, they got a kick out of destroying the theological and pseudo-spiritual myths. Mr. Beard has, in the quarter-century that has elapsed, continued his economic emphasis, although with something of a diminuendo. More and more his economic interest, never strongly rooted in an economic philosophy of history, has become an interest in economic problems and economic policy, such as foreign trade. His basic philosophy has become, as perhaps it always was less explicitly, a philosophy of voluntarism and contingency. More and more he dwells upon the role that chance and human effort play in fashioning history. More and more he admonishes us to "walk lightly," lest with our crude and unthinking tread we destroy the fragile web that history weaves.

I can agree with Mr. Beard that chance (*fortuna*, he calls it, after a formula which he borrows from Machiavelli) plays an appreciable role in human affairs, and that the human will (*virtù*) may within limits be powerful. But what are those limits? And how can the human will ascertain the unyielding trends of history (*necessità*) so as to work with them rather than to spend itself against them? We do not want final explanations. What we want is an approach to the movement of history, a way of interpreting it. What we want above all else is an instrument of analysis. One asks not only how fundamental are the economic forces, but what dynamic is there that they use and that uses them in the processes of history? The Marxians have an answer—the materialist dialectic, the shifting technologies creating shifting class relations and class conflicts in such a way that each era and each social system, out of its own energies and tensions, fulfils itself and gives way to the next. It may be an incomplete answer, it may be too sweeping or dogmatic. That remains to be determined as serious attempts continue to be made to apply it to the task of historic interpretation. But it does give philosophic roots to the emphasis on economic factors. I fail to find in Mr. Beard's system of thought any relation between his economic emphasis and his basic philosophy. Instead, I find a curious sort of split which seems to have widened with time, and which serves to account for the earnest attempt he makes to confront his earlier self.

**Moments**

*Bernard Shaw Okays a Few Saints*

Mr. Beard's plight, if it is one, is the more illuminating because he is one of the few progressive thinkers active today who span the entire period since the pre-war days. He has lived through the American imperialist venture, a World War, revolutions and threats of revolution, the terrible reality of fascism. He is thoroughly alive to the dangers that surround the human spirit—fearful lest amid the barbarities that encompass us it may be snuffed out. He represents, in short, the linking of past progressivism with present agonies. Out of the past progressivism comes his realistic economic strain; out of our present agonies comes his tortured plea, as he expressed it in his article on the Constitution in last week's *Nation,* to "walk lightly. Things are not so simple." He is fearful lest our civil liberties and our entire social heritage be wiped out by hasty action, whether with respect to the Supreme Court or the deeper problems of our economic organization. He knows the evils we suffer, but he is unwilling to flee from them to evils he knows not of. The only positive program he has linked his name with is one for American economic isolationism, as a way of avoiding the struggles for foreign markets and the complications of foreign wars. He wants to escape the tensions and contradictions of an era

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of corporate capitalism by a concentration on the home market and an admonition to walk lightly.

We can learn a good deal from Charles Beard. We can learn, as he has himself no doubt learned since this book, that people do not act—as, all too mechanically, he made the members of the Constitutional Convention act—from direct economic pressures and interests. For we know that the subtlest way in which class interests influence the course of history is through affecting the climate of opinion: often the people who are most enslaved to the going ideas are those who have no direct economic interest in the maintenance of them. We can learn from Charles Beard what the Marxians have thus far not taught us sufficiently but what Veblen did emphasize—a sense of the play of these conscious and subconscious psychological factors in retarding and even distorting the play of economic factors. But we must also learn that the economic interpretation of history cannot be merely a vague emphasis on economic factors. It must be part of a deeply rooted philosophy which makes room within the framework of economic forces for chance, contingency, and human effort.

# BOOKS

## Yesterday's Prodigies

*SWEAR BY THE NIGHT*. By Nathalia Crane. Random House. $1.50.

*BREAK THE HEART'S ANGER*. By Paul Engle. Doubleday, Doran and Company. $2.

THE predicament of a child prodigy turned adult is never an enviable one. We are advised of a pact whereby a pantheon of godparents who control the destiny of Miss Crane forbade any publication of the young poet's verses until the completion of her course at Barnard. In the light of the present volume the contract proves itself as salutary as it would appear in other respects Machiavellian. It has not, to be sure, spared Miss Crane the personal chagrin of finding herself a thoroughly negligible poet at twenty-two; yet it has precluded her exhibiting to the public eye the gradual erosion whereby a prodigy lays aside all that renders her prodigious.

"Swear by the Night" falls wide of distinction, whether one chooses to regard it as a first volume, or a fifth, or, if prose may qualify also, a seventh or eighth. Even Louis Untermeyer finds himself unconscionably hard put in his Foreword, and makes hurried mention of "dull jingles," "her lack of an even pitch and a balanced technique," "her contradictions," her elaborate obscurity "as if a child had turned pedant," and the like. "I said that when Nathalia was eleven years old she puzzled me," he concludes in some embarrassment. "She still does."

Yet the truth is as obvious as it is shattering: Nathalia Crane at twenty-two is no match for Nathalia Crane at eleven, and, as far as "Swear by the Night" is concerned, gives every evidence of having passed the last ten years of her life under a bell-jar. Lines like

> O Muse, why dost thou let anatomists
> Creep to thy shrine and tabulate thy charms?

are revelatory; for they indicate, as does the group as a whole, that Miss Crane long ago reached a pause in time and space, and if she ever dreamed of new worlds to conquer, has ceased to sigh for them. At present she remains either incapable of further growth or, like any veteran with half a dozen titles to her name, entirely content with her achievement. The sententiousness so charming in a child of eleven is still current in a number of these poems, but an earlier pertness and gaiety are missing. There are present also the same fondness for ballads in jog-trot time, the same breezy affectation of foreign placenames to insure a flavor of drollery, the same girlish taste for fantasy and myth, for bees, silkworms, roses, azure, and garlands—but like certain forms of youthful naughtiness, they have forfeited their capacity to delight.

Paul Engle's transformation is of another sort. In point of craftsmanship Mr. Engle remains as deficient as ever, and, indeed, in the current volume employs the blank-verse medium with more than ordinary slovenliness. He has, moreover, developed a taste for colloquialisms which must have been cultivated for the express entertainment of an Oxford coterie, since they long ago ceased to recommend themselves to American ears. Their effect, in general, is bathos itself:

> To you life says, Step on it, kid,
> Or yesterday will be kickin' you in the pants.

Occasionally they achieve a kind of humorless absurdity, as in the case of an ungentlemanly reference to the Statue of Liberty as "you skirt." The lyric interpolations with which the sections regularly conclude are scarcely more successful; one would like, for example, to attribute doggerel such as the following to recklessness rather than to an atrocious ear:

> But never have I known
> A deeper grief by a deep
> Ocean than here where the blown
> Men of the wild foam creep
> Over the clutching sand,
> Over the gray, gull-flown
> Beaches . . .

Yet when all Mr. Engle's damaging limitations have been pointed out—his fondness for personal oratory, his technical irresponsibility, his dependence on rhetorical afflatus and literary cant, his willingness to substitute easy generalities in place of considered dialectic—the book remains an astonishing one, in terms of its flat abnegation of the pioneer ideal for the Communist ideal. It would have been difficult even for the astute in such matters to foresee that the author of "American Song" would follow his celebration of the complete individual with a celebration of Lenin, Trotzky, Marx, and the Communist Manifesto. Yet the whole of "Break the Heart's Anger" is an inflamed protest against the forces of capital, fascism, and imperialist war, in which the chief nations of the world are taken in turn, declared ripe for revolution, and exhorted to present or eventual action.

The evocation of the Marxian ideal is, however, a highly romanticized one, even if it is a highly militant one. There will be many to question the validity of Mr. Engle's confused attempt to couple Lenin with Lincoln, and Trotzky with Washington, as kindred spirits. The fact that Mr. Engle has approached his task with the same evangelical fervor that he lent to his earlier apocalypse of the Wild West may serve to discredit to some extent the force of his present mood. Yet it must add an ironical flavor to the augury of an inspired supporter who in 1934 prominently advertised his contention that "Paul Engle is . . . a writer who will play his part in the resurgence of creative force that will mark this decade in our literary history." It would seem that Mr. Engle has again resurged; but, to borrow a valued Hearstian epithet, this time his song is strictly "un-American."

BEN BELITT

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*by WILLIAM C. WHITE*

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# The Illusion of Neutrality

*NEUTRALITY: ITS HISTORY, ECONOMICS, AND LAW*. Columbia University Press.

*VOL. II. THE NAPOLEONIC PERIOD*. By W. Alison Phillips and Arthur H. Reede. $3.75.

*VOL. III. THE WORLD WAR PERIOD*. By Edgar Turlington. $3.75.

*VOL. IV. TODAY AND TOMORROW*. By Philip C. Jessup. $2.75.

THREE centuries ago Hugo Grotius, the "father of international law," wrote: "It is the duty of those who stand apart from a war to do nothing which may strengthen the side whose cause is unjust, or which may hinder the movements of him who is carrying on a just war; and in a doubtful case to act alike to both sides."

Diplomats and jurists of more recent times have been less capable of distinguishing between justice and injustice and have accordingly developed the concept of the neutral obligation of complete impartiality. Not until 1935, however, was this obligation made a basis for a national neutrality policy which, though impartial in form, does in fact strengthen the side whose cause is unjust and hinder the movements of the victim of injustice. This achievement of the American Congress appears the more remarkable when it is reflected that the United States furnished the world the moral impulse which today denounces all military aggression as unjust. Such judgments, moreover, have been translated into political and legal decisions, subscribed to by the overwhelming majority of mankind, on the basis of international instruments largely fashioned by American statesmen—for example, the League Covenant, the Kellogg pact, and the Stimson doctrine.

The amended neutrality act, which in effect ignores the Covenant, scraps the pact, and dumps the Stimson doctrine into the ash-can, was signed by President Roosevelt on February 29, 1936, the date of publication of the last three of the four volumes on neutrality edited by Professor Philip C. Jessup of Columbia. Had these invaluable historical and analytical studies been read and taken to heart by Congress, the present legislation would be less appalling. Under its terms the President is bound until May 1, 1937, to ban American arms and loans not only to aggressors, who seldom need them, but also to those who may need them desperately for self-defense or for the collective restraint of aggression. Mussolini has already expressed his satisfaction. Hitler and Araki should be equally gratified. The isolationist redefinition of American neutral obligations might well have for its slogan: "Make the world safe for aggression!"

This unforeseen and undesired result flows from the current illusion that the problem of peace for America is the problem of neutrality and that the abandonment of neutral rights insures peace. Messrs. Jessup, Phillips, Reede, and Turlington demonstrate brilliantly and conclusively in these pages that neutral "rights" are always simple rationalizations of greed. But the abandonment of these rights is no guaranty of peace unless those economic interests of the nation abroad which these "rights" symbolize are also abandoned. Peace can be had through the sacrifice of profits only by retreat into the cyclone cellar of complete economic isolation. The only alternative is the cooperative protection of interests abroad through a system of collective security and sanctions. "Liberal" isolationists who oppose the collective system would be more honest if they frankly advocated the complete junking of American foreign trade and investments. There is no habitable halfway house.

The confusion and frustration of American "neutrality" policy are consequences of a refusal to face these alternatives. The complete abandonment of the American economic stake abroad would mean the collapse of American economy in the event of a general war. Recognizing the impossibility of any such fantastic policy, Congress has barred only loans and trade in arms. Other trade will go on as before—subject to ineffective moral pressure by the President—and will create anew all the old controversies and all the old ties which make American prosperity dependent upon belligerent markets in war time. Flight to the cyclone cellar is unthinkable. But American cooperation in a system of collective security is also unthinkable to the irrational isolationists. Congress has repudiated the collective system and done much to wreck it without daring to embrace the impossible alternative of autarchy. The result is hopeless muddle.

In the concluding volume of this excellent series Professor Jessup unfortunately shows evidence of not having quite thought through the muddle himself. He proposes American cooperation with other neutrals to embargo all trade impartially with all belligerents on the basis of the Argentine anti-war pact of 1933. He believes that the choice is between profits and peace, that no line can be drawn between justice and injustice in war, and that neutrality (modified) can be preserved in this fashion. His scheme is ingenious but in the reviewer's opinion unworkable. In a general war it would mean economic disaster for the United States, as would any scheme of economic isolation. In a limited war it would have little effect. "Neutrals" which are members of the League cannot embargo victims of aggression as well as aggressors. And if this distinction cannot be made, if justice and injustice, treaty-observance and treaty-violation, attack and defense are indeed indistinguishable, then the law of nations and the conscience of mankind are both bankrupt and we may as well throw up the whole enterprise of keeping the peace and descend into savagery forthwith.

For the future there will either be collective security or no security. Peace will either be preserved by cooperation among all nations interested in preserving it or it will not be preserved. Whatever its policies may be, America will not escape involvement in general insecurity and conflict, for America is part of the world. It is not free, economically, politically, psychologically, or morally, to stand aside and till its own garden. War spreads like a prairie fire, even to gardens behind high fences. Isolationism is unworkable, and "neutrality" has become dangerous nonsense. An America desiring peace will cooperate with Geneva in penalizing aggressors and strengthening the collective system. The price of peace for the United States is the sacrifice not of profits but of prejudice, not of trade but of tradition, not of interests abroad but of isolationism at home. These truths are elementary. Those who insist upon them are not dogmatists, pretending to speak with the voice of God, as Charles A. Beard would have it (*New Republic*, March 18, 1936). They are merely taking cognizance of certain obvious propositions which have never been refuted by those, like Beard, who remain muddled by "the uncertainty, tragedy, and sadness of things." These truths may be learned before May 1, 1937. Or they may not be. Washington may use Geneva's weakness as an excuse for non-cooperation. Geneva may use Washington's isolationism as an excuse for inaction. In either case aggressors will benefit, a second world war will be made inevitable, and America will be dragged into a catastrophe caused by blindness, lunacy, and stupidity.

FREDERICK L. SCHUMAN

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# "Take What You Want"

*SOUTH RIDING.* By Winifred Holtby. The Macmillan Company. $2.50.

WINIFRED HOLTBY, who died before this novel could be published, had chosen for its motto a Spanish proverb: " 'Take what you want,' said God. 'Take what you want—and pay for it.' " It was the perfect proverb for Miss Holtby's purpose, which was to reveal the fulness of life in one of its aspects. Life is always full in good fiction, but here it is full in a special way—a social way, in fact, though one must not leap to the conclusion that Miss Holtby has any more to say about society than that it is full. For her, or at any rate for the people in a mythical South Riding which she has set down somewhere in Yorkshire, society is absolutely full; it is a plenum. No individual can move in it without disturbing or displacing another individual; what is added to Smith is subtracted from Brown, and the multiplications of modernity produce a division in every soul. This is not what Emerson meant in "Compensation," nor is it what God meant, presumably, in the Spanish proverb. It has to do entirely with the vision of society which a sober and responsible person like Miss Holtby would have in days like ours—in days, that is to say, when society is assumed to be a machine running by itself, a machine with all of its parts exposed and with all of its mysteries waiting merely upon time to be explained.

Miss Holtby can be supposed, then, to have begun not so much with a vision of the people whose stories she wanted to tell as with a concept of the society which would contain and condition them. This is why she has to have so many people—there are 166—and why most of them have to be indistinct; the sum is Miss Holtby's theme, rather than any or even all of its parts. Each person is to be understood in the light of his relations, first to a few other persons and then to the whole of South Riding. Lydia Holly is more than a brown-legged girl who lives in a shack and loves Shakespeare; she is also the victim of a system which has not foreseen the likelihood of ambition in such waste places. The result is that Lydia makes a certain contribution to our knowledge of the Riding but in herself remains a sketch—a clear and delightful one as far as it goes, yet limited to a few strokes mechanically repeated. So down or up the entire list; Astell, Snaith, Huggins, Sawdon, Castle, and Mrs. Hubbard are suggested rather than created; no matter how many times we see them, and we see them many times, they mean exactly what they meant before, and make precisely the same gestures. So even with the three principals, Mrs. Beddows, Miss Burton, and Robert Carne. For all of Mrs. Beddows's reputed richness and depth she remains singularly empty of anything like personal force; and as for the other two, the lovers, Miss Holtby seems to have understood how necessary it was to borrow them from another literary tradition altogether. She borrows them from romance, and indeed from the Brontës—who also lived in Yorkshire, but who probably never knew that there is such a thing as society. They simply gave their people souls and dared them to save them; it was quite an individual matter, and intensely dramatic. Miss Holtby uses what she borrows only long enough to insure that her novel shall not be as dull as by definition it ought to be; then, true to her own tradition, she kills off Carne and reinstates the genius of local government.

If it is doubtful that a good novel can be written around an idea capable of statement in simpler terms, it is perhaps more doubtful that a good novel can be written around an idea as


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dreary as Miss Holtby's was—the idea, in brief, that the world will grow steadily if slowly better under the ministrations of many brave, obscure persons who cannot be daunted by its obvious desire to stand still. To say the worst of "South Riding" at once, it is a social worker's novel; or rather, since I do not want to call Miss Holtby names, a novel for all those who like to be warmed by such sentiments as fill the final chapter to overflowing. But to say the worst of "South Riding" is to misrepresent it and its author.

I admire both—the book for its numerous sections wherein the purpose is forgotten and the idea transcended, and the author for the great native ability which she undoubtedly possessed. This ability, and the remarkable amount of character that went with it, saved Miss Holtby from being either dull or false beyond the degree made inescapable by her prescription. If she was condemned to sketchiness, her sketches nevertheless are brilliant; and she tells a dozen stories as well as they could have been told under the circumstances—under the prohibition, that is, to let any one of them become absorbing. She was most the artist, as often happens, when least aware of her program; when, for example, and here I make use of Vera Brittain's "Epitaph" at the close, the shadow of her own death deepened what she wrote. It was perhaps no paradox for her that Robert Carne became most lifelike as he faded from the world she had made for him, or that this world grew most credible and beautiful in proportion as it tended to hang stationary, a remote vision, in her mind. She paid, of course, the highest possible price for her success; and so did contemporary British letters, which boasted too few names of her distinction.

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*GAUDY NIGHT.* By Dorothy L. Sayers. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50.

*THE CRIMSON PATCH.* By Phoebe Atwood Taylor. W. W. Norton and Company. $2.

"THIS mystery is also a novel. This novel is also a romance." So the blurb-writer for Messrs. Harcourt, Brace announces "Gaudy Night," a new detective story by Dorothy Sayers. This statement has a rather pathetic and desperate candor, the candor of the unregenerate bluffer who hopes by putting a bold face on it to convert a liability into an asset. The facts are that "Gaudy Night" as a romance is cloudy and long-winded; as a novel it has moments of atmospheric interest; but as a detective story it is a thoroughgoing, dismal flop. This tale of the terrorization of an Oxford woman's college commits at least three unforgivable detective-story sins. In the first place, there is no murder; and while some detective-story readers like few murders and some like many, all detective-story readers like *one* murder. In the second place, there is no action: almost 275 pages of the conversation of female dons must be leafed through before the Shrewsbury College Menace becomes anything more than mildly annoying. In the third place, there is no problem, and therefore, really, no mystery. It is true that the identity of the culprit is shielded until the last few pages of the novel, but more than this is needed to make a mystery story truly mysterious. The essence of the pure detective story is that it should present a central problem, or problems, which seems, on the face of it, impossible of solution: the mystery of the locked room and the mystery of the perfect alibi are the problems most frequently used and therefore most familiar to detective-story readers. In the perfect mystery the murderer avoids detection, not because the detective cannot physically lay his hand on him, but because the criminal has so cleverly distorted and thereby camouflaged his crime that it is impossible for the detective even to grasp its nature and meaning, let alone its perpetrator. Dorothy Sayers has, in the past, produced excellent examples of the pure detective story, but in the hybrid "Gaudy Night" she has given us a primer mystery in which the criminal escapes her pursuers only by being slightly fleeter of foot.

The metamorphosis of Dorothy Sayers is interesting, even though a little unfortunate. It may be that from the very beginning Miss Sayers, the brilliant detective-story writer, was a frustrated novelist. Certain it is that in successive mysteries she has been edging, more and more boldly, into the novelist's territory, until with "Gaudy Night" she has flatly put her foot in it, in more senses that one. Miss Sayers as a detective-story writer was considered, quite rightly, a stylist, a wit, a psychologist, a scholar. Since the standards by which a novelist is measured are inevitably more severe, Miss Sayers as a novelist can now lay claim to scholarship alone. She can still quote aptly from Burton, Drayton, Sir John Harington, Sir Thomas Browne, Sir Philip Sidney, but laid bare in a full-length novel her style seems prosy, her wit over-prim and spinsterish, her psychology slightly antiquated and mechanical. Her venture into the novelist's field is exactly as regrettable and as awkward as the stage debut of a drawing-room mimic. The novel has gained no new Aldous Huxley, and the mystery story has, temporarily, at any rate, lost one of its most able practitioners.

The metamorphosis of Miss Sayers is perhaps significant. It is possible that the mystery story is even now in its death throes, and that mystery-story writers, powerless to invent new soluble-insoluble problems, will soon be obliged to follow Miss Sayers



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into "art" literature or else give up writing altogether. "The Crimson Patch" by Phoebe Atwood Taylor also foreshadows the death of its genre. The latest of Mrs. Taylor's Cape Cod stories is, as usual, loaded with local color, "picturesque" humor, and diehard political propaganda; but like "Gaudy Night" it is not very mysterious. Here again the unmasking of the villain comes as no shock to the reader. "The Crimson Patch" has action, and it has two murders; but it has no proper knotty central problem. It is a thin, conventional story, but, in its small way, symptomatic. Mrs. Taylor too, though more quietly and tentatively than Miss Sayers, has sauntered out of the detective-story preserves. By pinning the murders on a "parlor pink" who has a number of unkind and absurd things to say about capitalists, she has, in a ladylike manner, identified herself with the rostrum.

MARY MCCARTHY

# DRAMA

## "The Holy Blissful Martyr"

THE Federal Theater Project has undertaken plays of various sorts, from the simple entertainment to the revolutionary drama heavy with the problems of today. Being sensible persons, its directors have assumed that the audience for drama at popular prices was most likely to be attracted by either the one or the other, and "Triple A Plowed Under" did, indeed, achieve a sort of *succès de scandal*. But who—sensible or not sensible—would have supposed that its one real "hit" to date would be a drama in verse dealing with certain complicated events in twelfth-century England? T. S. Eliot, the author, is not an easy writer, and the question of the extent to which the character of Thomas à Becket was truly saintly is hardly a burning one today. The relevance to contemporary problems is indirect, to say the least, and it would be easy to prove that no one with a head on his shoulders or a heart in his breast could possibly concern himself with it just now. Yet "Murder in the Cathedral" (Manhattan Theater) is a hit. The fact proves nothing at all; but there are some things upon which it does, perhaps, cast certain doubts.

When the play was published here last fall, it was reviewed by Mark Van Doren in our issue for October 9. What chiefly remains to be said is that it acts extremely well and that Mr. Eliot, whom we thought of as a lyric and reflective poet of intense if constricted force, can write lines which are speakable and chantable with striking effect. To say this is not—as any prospective spectator unfamiliar with the text should be warned—to say that he writes in what we are accustomed to think of as the natural style of the poetic drama. He does not attempt to adapt the manner and moods of poetry to contemporary theatrical practice, as Maxwell Anderson, for example, does. Neither does he make any effort to achieve the Shakespearean effect, produced through the fact that the language and versification are so flexible, so varied in accordance with the situation and the character, that dramatic verse becomes something entirely different from lyrical or reflective poetry, and that in consequence one comes to be more aware of its richness and adaptability than of the fact that it is verse. Mr. Eliot has neither the vitality, the exuberance, nor the broad sympathetic understanding of men and tempers for anything of the sort. He is intense rather than (pardon the paradox), in this sense, cath-

Act I
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olic. For all his critical studies in the field he is, for that reason, by no means Elizabethan. He is medieval instead, and what one thinks of is not "Hamlet" but "Everyman," the liturgical drama of the church not the popular if exalted entertainment of the sixteenth-century inn yard.

To some extent, of course, this effect is due to the fact that some of his characters are pure abstractions—the four "Tempters" for example; that other characters, like the Women of Canterbury, are symbols not persons; and that the action is conducted in a manner closer to that of the pageant and processional than to that of the more complexly evolved drama. But its medieval character goes deeper, pervading as it does the whole conception both of what is suitable expression and what is the nature of essential reality. The tone is uniform not varied, because the sense of the importance of personality as expressed in individual variations is foreign to the spirit of a drama dealing with conceptions not persons, and because, therefore, it is through formalization rather than through representational variety that the intended effect can be achieved. And unless I am very much mistaken, the point of view of the dramatist, the judgment which he finally makes upon the events with which he has been dealing, can also be grasped only in these essentially medieval terms.

Eliot begins when the people of Canterbury, cleric and lay alike, are awaiting the return of Thomas from his seven years of exile. He shows the Archbishop beset by four tempters, the last and most dangerous of whom whispers that the crown of martyrdom is the only crown really worth a great man's ambition. And he ends with the lamentations of the people, who, as he had told them in a sermon true Christians must often do, find themselves mourning and rejoicing at the same time over a Christian mystery, this time the mystery of martyrdom. At no time is there any attempt to hide the human and often unworthy forces at work. Just as Thomas is not only a saint but an ambitious man as well, so the conflict between Henry and the Pope is a struggle for power as well as a struggle between the idea of earthly sovereignty and the idea of the Divine Will, to which even kings should be subject. Yet the whole emotion of the play would be meaningless if these facts were interpreted in accord with the habit of post-Renaissance rationalism. Mr. Eliot is certainly not saying that Becket was a fraud and his martyrdom no more than an incident in a political struggle. After all, the Middle Ages knew as well as we know that men were fallible and their motives mixed. Mr. Eliot is saying, or rather putting us in the mood to feel, that it was, nevertheless, rather they than we who knew how to interpret that fact. The human and the unworthy are incidental, not central, and the mystery of martyrdom is more real than the circumstances amid which it occurs. It is we not they who mistake what seems to be for what really is.

Halsted Welles, who staged the present production, deserves great credit for the extremely effective grouping, and Tom Cracraft deserves equal credit for the fine stylized set. Most of the performances are also good, especially that of Harry Irvine, who gives Thomas fine dignity and fire. For obvious reasons the cast is miscellaneous and its members of varying degrees of suitability for their roles, but the direction has pulled things together in surprisingly effective fashion. The little comic interlude toward the end in which the four assassins address the audience is a superb piece of parody. The following note—doubtless not formulated with this production in mind—appears on the program: "The Federal Theater Project is part of the WPA program. However, the viewpoint expressed in this play is not necessarily that of the WPA or any other agency of the government." JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

# RECORDS

OUT in Bridgeport, Connecticut, William Seltsam has for the past four years been quietly issuing to the members of his International Record Collectors' Club repressings of records by such artists as Adelina Patti, Edouard de Reszke, Lilli Lehmann, even Ellen Terry. The organization has members in places as distant as Denmark, Australia, and Manchuria. Occasionally Mr. Seltsam digs up an unpublished recording, such as the Caruso-Farrar duet from the end of the first act of "La Bohème." Some of the earlier versions have only piano accompaniment for operatic arias, like the 1903 recording of "Mi par d'udire ancora" from "The Pearl Fishers," by Caruso, found on the other side of the "Bohème" duet. But if the few I have heard are fair examples, the repressings are worth having, for more than mere historical interest. Prices range from $1.75 for double-sided ten-inch records to $2.50 for the more expensive twelve-inchers. Mr. Seltsam's address is 318 Reservoir Avenue, Bridgeport.

One of the most gratifying of the recent Victor orchestral releases is a new version of Mendelssohn's "Italian" symphony, played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitzky (three records, $6.50). It is issued to replace an older recording by the Scala Orchestra under Ettore Panizza. Mr. Koussevitzky does not play little tricks with the tempi, as he did with the Mozart G minor, but gives a straightforward, direct, and therefore exciting performance. The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, directed by Arthur Fiedler, adds to its list of best-sellers Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" march and the "Grand March" from "Aïda" (one record, $1.50). Here is a good present for your adolescent nephew who is just beginning to appreciate "good" music. It will gratify him to discover a symphony orchestra acting up like the Seventh Regiment Band.

An even louder recording, though not so likely to be appreciated by the nephew, is that of Arnold Zemachson's Chorale and Fugue in D minor (two records, $4). It is played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy, who is to conduct the Philadelphians next year. The composition sounds like one of Mr. Stokowski's transcriptions of Bach, only more so—ingenious and dramatic imitations of the pipe organ that try to go it one better and often succeed. The music is highly effective but recommended only for phonographs that can reproduce the maximum of sound without distortion. A good phonograph is also needed to do justice to the delicate orchestral colorings of Debussy's "Iberia" and "Soirée dans Grenade," re-recorded by the Paris Conservatory Orchestra under Piero Coppola (three records, $5).

The solidest musical fare of the month is offered in the first album of the Brandenburg concertos, played by the Busch Chamber Players under the direction of Adolf Busch (eight records, $11.50). Mr. Busch plays the solo violin parts himself and does them superbly. The album contains the first four concertos, and Columbia promises the other two next month. The only appreciable defect in the performance is that Marcel Moyse, the first flute, forces his instrument off pitch in one or two fortissimo passages; but this is more than compensated for by his accomplished playing of the softer passages, and by the beautiful performance of the solo oboe, Evelyn Rothwell.

In a less serious vein are Heifetz's album of the "Vieuxtemps" concerto in D minor (Victor, three records, $6.50) and Robert Casadesus's two records of the Weber "Concertstück" (Columbia, $3). HENRY SIMON

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## *Joseph Wood Krutch says:*

*CALL IT A DAY. Morosco Theater.* Gay and delightful comedy about what almost happened to an English family on the first dangerous day of spring.

*DEAD END. Belasco Theater.* A play about gangsters in the making on an East River waterfront. More a good show than a great drama, but a very good show indeed.

*SAINT JOAN. Martin Beck Theater.* Brilliant interpretation by Katharine Cornell of what may well be Shaw's most enduring play.

*END OF SUMMER. Guild Theater.* The wittiest of American playwrights sets a group of interesting people to talking about the world as we find it. Ina Claire and Osgood Perkins help make a very happy evening.

*ETHAN FROME. National Theater.* The apparently impossible task of dramatization of Edith Wharton's novel achieved with conspicuous success. Outstanding performances by Pauline Lord, Ruth Gordon, and Raymond Massey.

THE CASE OF CLYDE GRIFFITHS. *Ethel Barrymore Theater.* A "Now, children" version of "An American Tragedy," showing how economics explains everything.

*PRIDE AND PREJUDICE. Plymouth Theater.* Amazingly successful adaptation, brilliantly staged and acted. A thoroughly delightful evening in the theater.

*VICTORIA REGINA. Broadhurst Theater.* Delightful series of scenes from Laurence Housman's drama stunningly acted by Helen Hayes and others. Fairer to the matron queen than Strachey but funny nevertheless and charming besides.

## *Mark Van Doren says:*

*AH, WILDERNESS. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.* Eugene O'Neill's touching and searching comedy of high-school days translated into a film which charms by its own right. Full of recognitions for the middle-aged.

*A NIGHT AT THE OPERA. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.* The Marx Brothers in their best picture to date. Hilarious and brilliant.

*ANNIE OAKLEY. R.K.O.* A minor American masterpiece based on the life of Buffalo Bill's best-loved sharpshooter. Barbara Stanwyck as Annie Oakley divides the honors with Sitting Bull.

*MODERN TIMES. Charles Chaplin.* Charlie Chaplin returns to the screen disguised as his old self and fulfils every expectation. Should be seen by everyone—and heard, for he has sound effects.

*THE 39 STEPS. Alexander Korda.* Months old, but should be seen wherever possible. A swift and beautiful thriller set in the Highlands, and one of several films which argue British leadership in the immediate future.

*THE GHOST GOES WEST. Alexander Korda.* René Clair's first film in English, with scenes in Scotland and the United States. Clever, satirical, and fanciful, but without the master touch.

*THE PRISONER OF SHARK ISLAND. Fox.* Tells the story of Dr. Mudd, convicted in 1865 of having helped Booth to escape. Somber and powerful; does not spare the spectator.


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Matinees, Thursday and Saturday at 2:40

THE THEATRE GUILD *presents*
**IDIOT'S DELIGHT**
*a new play by* ROBERT E. SHERWOOD
*with* ALFRED LUNT *and* LYNN FONTANNE
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# *The Intelligent Traveler*

BY JOHN ROTHSCHILD

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

IT IS easy enough to get on a boat and go abroad, but I venture to guess that on the homeward voyage many a traveler tries to sift his jumbled impressions and wonders why he went. Generally speaking, the things that everybody does abroad are the things that nobody ought to do.

Certain agencies in this country are prepared to remedy this situation. Some are government information offices; others are cultural organizations whose function is the spread of knowledge about particular countries. The organizations suggested here are sometimes official and sometimes not. Most of them do not sell travel services. The railroad offices give details on costs, hotel accommodations, and the usual "tourist events"; the cultural organizations help you to decide what you want to see and where to find it.

*The Soviet Union.* All visitors to the Soviet Union make the acquaintance of Intourist; indeed it is almost impossible to travel there otherwise unless one has official business. Intourist is unique: it constitutes a complete monopoly of travel facilities—an administrative centralization of services, Soviet style, which has as its aim not the exploitation of the consumer but standardization of services, price uniformity, and elimination of waste motion. This does not mean regimentation of travelers. In such a vast country, strict control of what visitors see and do would be impossible, even if there were the will to exercise it, which there is not. Intourist acts as the coordinator, and is improving services for travelers with every season. In this country Intourist, 545 Fifth Avenue, is an information center; it does not sell travel services to the public direct.

*Germany.* Readers of *The Nation* who want to see what fascism means to the German people and have the sort of contacts that will enable them to do so will find the German Railroad Information Office, 665 Fifth Avenue, helpful in giving technical travel information. Since this is a government agency, its advice on what to see and how to see it naturally represents an official point of view. Anyone who wishes to approach Germany critically will do well to make contact with the various relief organizations for suggestions.

*Italy.* Italy, as well as Germany, attempts to counteract distrust of fascism by special discounts to travelers. The Italian State Railways, 626 Fifth Avenue, furnish technical information. The Italy-America Society, 301 Park Avenue, exists to foster good-will between the countries, and although it represents the government point of view it is prepared to give intelligent information on Italy's art, festivals, and other classic attractions.

*England.* The British Travel Association in Rockefeller Center furnishes lists of interesting events and places to see, as well as railroad and hotel information. For specific cultural or educational information the British Library of Information, 270 Madison Avenue, is useful. The English-Speaking Union, 19 West Forty-fourth Street, has branches in all parts of the British Empire. It performs many services for members in the way of introductions, the use of its clubroom facilities, and the like. Its travel department has available much helpful information.

*Spain.* "Revolution hunters" who want to see the barricades and have the courage to brave the more or less uncharted hotels and trains of Spain should communicate with the Spanish Official Chamber of Commerce, 501 Madison Avenue, for what little information exists in this country regarding Spain.

*Scandinavia.* The Scandinavian countries are among the few places in the world where early radical trends have resulted in a social and economic pattern which withstands the shocks of world depression. The cooperative movement and the adult-education movement are better developed and more consequential there than anywhere else in the world. The librarian at the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 116 East Sixty-fourth Street, can help visitors who want to do more than tourist sightseeing. The Swedish State Railways, 630 Fifth Avenue, are the source for technical travel facts.

*Eastern Europe.* Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia are rich in peasant arts, in scenery, and in associations that go back to the beginnings of man's history. The great festivals are well advertised, but the charm of this region lies off the main routes. The following are enthusiasts who know one or another of these countries well and are willing to share their knowledge.

Elma Pratt, director of the International School of Art, 5 East Twenty-eighth Street. The school has representatives in all of the countries named—usually citizens distinguished in the arts. Miss Pratt can be especially helpful to travelers interested in peasant arts, but will give general advice to others.

Meda Lynn, at the Hungarian-American Society, Rockefeller Center, is particularly informed regarding peasant life.

Mme. Irina Piotrowska, of the Polish Cultural Center, 151 East Sixty-seventh Street, is an authority on Poland. The center is part of the Polish consulate but goes far beyond the usual governmental services in helpfulness to travelers.

*Yugoslavia.* What technical information there is can be had from the Consulate of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 745 Fifth Avenue. Miss Pratt, listed above, also knows Yugoslavia well.

*France.* The newly opened French Information Center, 610 Fifth Avenue, is a cultural institution prepared to dispense all sorts of general information, but travel questions will be answered by the Railways of France at the same address.

Other countries and localities are more or less covered by the following agencies:

*Switzerland.* Swiss Federal Railways, 475 Fifth Avenue.

*China.* The China Society of America, 570 Lexington Avenue.

*Japan.* The Japan Tourist Bureau, 551 Fifth Avenue; the Japan Society, 527 Fifth Avenue.

*India.* India State Railways Bureau, 38 East Fifty-seventh Street.

*North Africa.* North African Tour Department, French Line, 610 Fifth Avenue.

*South Africa.* South African Legation, 2125 Leroy Place, Washington, D. C.

*Egypt.* Egyptian Tourist Development Association, Rockefeller Center.

*South America.* Pan-American Airways, 135 East Forty-second Street, has just finished a thorough survey of all the South American countries.

*Mexico.* Committee for Cultural Re-

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lations with Latin America, 112 East Nineteenth Street; Aguirres Guest Tours, Cinco de Mayo, 16-C, Mexico City.

*Summer Schools.* About the cheapest and most satisfactory way of sizing up a country in a short time is to attend one of the many excellent summer sessions abroad. Complete information waits upon the publication of summer catalogues, which often arrive here late. The Institute of International Education, 2 West Forty-fifth Street, has the dates as soon as they are available.

Information regarding student gatherings may be obtained from the National Student Federation of America, 8 West Fortieth Street, and the American Student Union, 112 East Nineteenth Street.

Information regarding conferences and lecture series in the field of international relations may be obtained from the League of Nations Association, 8 West Fortieth Street, and the World Peace Foundation, 8 West Fortieth Street.

Conferences and events of interest to educators may be learned about from the Progressive Education Association, 310 West Ninetieth Street.

*The Summer Theater Abroad.* The April issue of *Theater Arts Monthly,* 40 East Forty-ninth Street, contains invaluable information on theatrical and musical events and festivals abroad during the coming summer. These schedules should be in the pocket of everyone who visits Europe or Mexico this summer.

All addresses in the foregoing article are in New York City unless otherwise stated.

# *Letters to the Editors*

## THE FORMAT AGAIN

*Dear Sirs:* I like everything about the new format, especially the typographic variations which personalize your departments. The old format was growing definitely stodgy. The new format makes you look years younger and more healthy.

LEIGH WHITE

New York, March 23

*Dear Sirs:* We don't like your new format. We liked better the old, thin, light *Nation,* easy to hold and turn over. We feel irritated and unhappy and wonder how other *Nation* subscribers feel about the change.

L. S. AND M. N. MORRISON

West Hartford, Conn., March 22

*Dear Sirs:* I am very much distressed over the new format of *The Nation.* We have taken the paper as long as I can remember, and I have always enjoyed—yes, taken pride in—not only the contents but its elegant, distinctive appearance, which I considered the essence of good taste. Without exception I hate every one of your innovations, especially the common drawings. *The Nation's* format was perfect before; why change it?

EMILY DEMBITZ

Louisville, Ky., March 21

*Dear Sirs:* I regret that I am no one in particular, merely a long-standing subscriber, but I am moved to tell you how much I enjoy and admire your new format.

I like it all, save possibly the cartoons, which I don't mind if others find them pleasing.

It is a real pleasure to read it in its new, cheerful type. I do think it was a bit stodgy before, though I never gave it much thought. Please accept my warmest congratulations.

HELEN LEIGHTON

Brookline, Mass., March 23

*Dear Sirs:* I rejoice to find in your March 25 issue companions to join me in my groans over the format of the new, blatant *Nation.* I have been a subscriber for so long a time that it seems it must be from my cradle (I am now seventy-one), and I feel as though I had lost an all-time friend.

AGNES GODFREY GAY

Washington, D. C., March 21

## MORE SPACE FOR RECORDS

*Dear Sirs:* I have enjoyed Henry Simon's column on Records—it fills a long-felt want, at least in my own case. But may I offer a friendly criticism?

It seems to me the column is too short. Mr. Simon hardly does more than mention the new recordings. I should prefer to see him elaborate on some of the matters he now mentions and also to speak of some of the recordings he now omits, apparently for lack of space.

M. S. WEINSTEIN

Brooklyn, March 9

## AND FOR CONSUMERS

*Dear Sirs:* I am glad to find Miss Brindze's articles on the consumer given a whole page in *The Nation.* Her articles are important and helpful and it is worth while to play them up. It is too bad you can't afford to give her more space.

New York, March 15 W. GLYN

## MODERN PARIAHS

*Dear Sirs:* My hearty thanks for Mr. Villard's article on the Jewish situation in Germany in *The Nation* of March 4. He has spoken the word which I hoped would come from some Christian friend of humanity and the Jews, because no statement however eloquent emanating from Jewish sources carries the conviction that such an article from a Gentile does.

Mr. Villard's approach to the question of anti-Semitism, that is, its effect on the soul of the anti-Semite, is the only one which will ultimately solve the problem. The world has been so full of horrors of which Armenians, Jews, Chinese, and so forth have been the victims that it has grown callous to the troubles of individual groups. The Hitler regime will be changed only when the best people of every land let it be known that the present leaders of the German people are the pariahs of civilization.

HUGO MOCK

New York, March 30

## SALUTE TO MR. RAVAGE

*Dears Sirs:* I've just finished M. E. Ravage's article on French politics (*The Nation,* March 18) and I'm so overjoyed by his grasp of what seems to me the reality of the French situation. It does my heart good to see somebody writing on present-day France who knows what he is talking about and hasn't any ax to grind.

In general, *The Nation* is grand these days. DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

Arlington, Vt., March 18

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## A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

*Dear Sirs:* I was shocked to see in the pages of *The Nation* so shallow, superficial, and sentimental an editorial as that in the issue of March 18 dealing with the decision of the New York Court of Appeals which declared the minimum-wage law for women unconstitutional.

You say, "It happened to involve the laundry industry, which is notoriously ill-paid, long-houred, exploited. The workers are principally Negro women. Their work is unskilled; cutthroat competition abounds in the industry; the firms are small and many; union organization is weak."

Is *The Nation,* of all magazines, contending now that the rights and liberties of hundreds of thousands of intelligent, hard-working women in the state of New York must be sacrificed to protect a small group of oppressed and unfortunate Negro women who could be protected infinitely better if the same amount of money and effort were put into organizing them that has been put into the framing and passage of this unfair and unjust minimum-wage law?

For one woman who gains by legislation that applies unequally to men and women, thousands lose through undercutting by men and boys. Time and time again it has been proved that minimum-wage laws, applying to women only, result in lower wages for all.

MARION LOUISE KENNEY,
Delaware State Chairman,
National Woman's Party

Marshallton, Del., March 16

*Dear Sirs:* A summary of the January work of the Enforcement Bureau of the Division of Minimum Wage of the State Department of Labor shows that in January, 1936, there was collected $2591.88 for 1,046 women laundry workers in 134 wage adjustments. That certainly looks to me as if we needed a minimum-wage law.

Second, a study of wages and family responsibilities of employed women whose families are on relief shows that "6,674 gainfully employed women in New York City were on home relief (May to September, 1935) because their earnings were inadequate for the support of themselves and their families." It makes me indignant that taxpayers must thus subsidize the employers of these women in practically all industries and occupations.

In the face of this sort of situation, which could occur even while we had a minimum-wage law in effect, comes the majority decision of the Court of Appeals that this law is unconstitutional. Reading the two opinions, and seeing them side by side, one can have no doubt as to which shows more careful thought, social intelligence, and real appreciation of the entire subject of constitutionality as applied to minimum-wage legislation. Can we never hope for the use of plain common sense by a majority of our judicial officers? I am outraged by this latest example of their stupid, hazy legal technicalities and evasions, and a number of citizens join me in what we feel cannot be too strong a protest against this myopic decision. W. WEBSTER

New York, March 18

## SOVIET CENSORSHIP

*Dear Sirs:* During the last few months the stupid Soviet censor has been stopping my copies of *The Nation.* For thirteen years he allowed them to reach me. But now he has apparently suffered a new accession of imbecility. The Foreign Commissariat intervened on my behalf, but the censor's authority, it seems is higher. Will you please, therefore, mail *The Nation* to me in sealed envelopes. Perhaps these will escape his prying fingers. LOUIS FISCHER

Moscow, February 25

## CORRECTION

In our issue of January 1, 1936, we published a letter signed by Helen Kay as secretary of the League of Women Shoppers about the activities of the League, which included a reflection upon Hyman Nemser and a Retail Clerks' Union of which he was then the head.

We are now informed by the League of Women Shoppers that that part of its communication was based on misinformation, and that in fairness to Mr. Nemser it desires to state that further investigation showed no basis of fact for the statement that the Retail Clerks' Union had no worker members or for the allegation that Mr. Nemser had extorted money from workers.

EDITORS OF THE NATION

*INFORMATION FOR SUBSCRIBERS*

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## *CONTRIBUTORS*

LOUIS FISCHER, *The Nation's* Moscow correspondent, has spent most of the winter away from Moscow. He is now in Italy and presently will go to Spain. But in these days of interwoven international complications this is undoubtedly the best way to look at the Russian scene. Mr. Fischer will return to the U. S. S. R. in about a month.

CARLETON BEALS started his career as one of *The Nation's* star reporters when he followed Sandino around Nicaragua in 1928. Neither geographical, meteorological, nor temporal difficulties can prevent Mr. Beals from seeing all there is to see. His researches in Alabama, out of which he will write two articles, are no exception.

ALBERT VITON is the pseudonym of a young foreign correspondent formerly in Germany and Italy, now traveling in Palestine. Mr. Viton's article After Ethiopia—England? which appeared in *The Nation* for October 16, 1935, was quoted in scores of papers all over the country.

FREDERICK L. SCHUMAN is the author of "American Policy Toward Russia Since 1917" and "The Nazi Dictatorship." He is a member of the Department of Political Science of the University of Chicago.

MARY McCARTHY'S articles on the critics, which she wrote last fall in collaboration with Margaret Marshall, caused a very hot tempest in the book-reviewing teapot.

HENRY SIMON, *The Nation's* reviewer of musical recordings, is an enthusiastic amateur musician, preferring string quartets. He is also professor of English at New College.

JOHN ROTHSCHILD, whose useful information for the intelligent traveler has appeared for several years in *The Nation,* is director of the Open Road.

GEORGE SCHREIBER'S lively caricatures of Washington celebrities, which appear regularly in *The Nation,* are drawn from life and on the spot. Mr. Schreiber is accompanying PAUL W. WARD on his reportorial rounds.

STUYVESANT VAN VEEN'S cartoons of William Saroyan and Havelock Ellis have already appeared in *The Nation.* He will draw T. S. Eliot next week.

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